

SURVEY ON CHARLIE HEBDO BEARS SCRUTINY



Bill Donohue analyzes the Pew Research Center survey on the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons:

Pew Research does excellent work, and it provides another service in surveying the public on its reaction to the *Charlie Hebdo* controversy. But there is more to its findings than what it seems.

The survey found that 76 percent of U.S. adults had heard about the attack on *Charlie Hebdo*. Of that portion, 60 percent said it was okay to publish the cartoons; 28 percent disagreed; and 12 percent either did not know or refused to answer. Women and non-whites were more likely to say it was “not okay.” Seven out of ten who said it was okay cited freedom of speech and freedom of the press as their reason.

It is not clear how those surveyed interpreted the question. For instance, when asked whether it was okay to publish the cartoons, were respondents thinking about legalities alone? Had they been asked a different question, it may have elicited a different response. Here’s an example: “Even if we grant the legal right to publish the cartoons, is it the right thing to do?”

The initial question is itself open to critical analysis. Respondents were told that “over the past several years this magazine has published cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad, which some people found offensive to their religious beliefs.”

From my discussions with well-educated persons in the media about this issue, I was struck by how many thought these cartoons were simply a little edgy. Not true: some were, but others were downright obscene. Indeed, some were so vulgar as to be pornographic. So if many of those in the media didn't know about the vile nature of some of these cartoons, it is a safe bet that most of those who said they heard about them were unaware of just how offensive some of the cartoons were.

Depicting Muhammad in a snarky way is one thing; it is quite another to obscenely trash him.

INDIANA BILL AFFIRMS RELIGIOUS LIBERTY



Bill Donohue comments on how Indiana is moving forward in the fight for religion-based hiring:

If a young woman who cannot take care of her child elects not to abort her baby, and seeks to place her offspring in the care of a religious agency, most people would say she has every right to do so. However, Indiana's attorney general recently decided that the woman placing her baby in a typical religious adoption agency should not expect that her baby will be raised in the religion of her choice. That's because the typical religious institution, like all private institutions, does at least some of its business with the public sector, often in the form of state or federal contracts. The attorney general concluded that the traditional religious exemption

from state oversight should no longer apply.

This week the Indiana Senate Law Committee voted 7-0 to advance a bill to the full Senate that overturns the attorney general's decision. Under federal law, government contracts to religious institutions does not mean that these entities cannot hire on the basis of religion. What the Indiana panel is doing is securing for religious institutions the right to contract with state agencies without forfeiting their right to affirm their religious prerogatives. They are doing the right thing.

The issue that sparked this debate was the right of Indiana Wesleyan University to hire on the basis of allegiance to its Christian tenets. It maintains a set of lifestyle strictures governing sexual expression, as well as on matters such as smoking, that employees are expected to respect. Those who believe in tolerance, diversity, and voluntary consent should applaud the right of this school to determine its own rules.

The media are spinning this story as the right of religious institutions to discriminate in hiring. A more honest appraisal would question the authority of the government to sit in judgment of the hiring criteria of religious institutions, with or without a state contract.

The Catholic League applauds the work of this Indiana panel and looks forward to a favorable vote in the full Senate.

LADY GAGA GETS RAUNCHY



Bill Donohue comments on Lady Gaga's weekend bender:

Lady Gaga's bacchanal began Friday night in a New York City hotel and ended Sunday morning. The occasion was a bachelorette party that featured her Catholic high school friends. Standing among her male stripper pals, the caption on the photo read, "Lord help the parents of Catholic school girls."

It would have been more accurate to say, "Lord help the parents of these Catholic school girls" (the ones from the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Manhattan). They got drunk, wrecked the hotel room, ate like pigs, pole danced all night, and celebrated with phallic symbols: from the cake in the shape of a penis to the penis-shaped candles, the gals got as raunchy as it gets. Their role model, of course, was Lady Gaga; she wore a sports bra and tight shorts.

The problems that beset Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta, a.k.a Lady Gaga, have much to do with her twisted understanding of freedom. Here is what she said just before she became famous: "I was onstage with a thong, with a fringe hanging over my ass thinking that it covered it, lighting hairsprays on fire, go-go dancing to Black Sabbath and singing songs about oral sex. The kids would scream and cheer and then we'd all go grab a beer. It represented freedom to me."

By rejecting the Catholic Church's definition of freedom—the right to do what we ought to do—Lady Gaga has paid a high price for her delusional idea. Last October she told her fans in London, "I take medication every day for mental illness and depression and don't feel bad about it."

We feel badly for her and hope she rediscovers her Catholic roots.

MEDIA BLACKOUT OF MARCH FOR LIFE



Bill Donohue comments on yesterday's March for Life:

The big media outlets are overwhelmingly in the pro-abortion camp, so it hardly surprises to learn that ABC and NBC never mentioned the March for Life in its nightly news broadcast; CBS made a passing reference to it in a story on the controversy over a Republican bill on abortion. The only newspaper to run a story on the demonstration was the *Washington Times*.

We have known for three decades that those who work in the most influential media jobs have little interest in religion and are huge proponents of abortion rights. The two issues don't have to go together—there are principled atheists such as Nat Hentoff who are pro-life—but usually they do.

The 1986 book by S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda Lichter, *The Media Elite*, which was based on a 1980 survey of the media top brass, found that 94 percent of Americans professed a belief in religion and that 86 percent said religious beliefs were important to them; only 50 percent of the media elite held religious beliefs and 86 percent said

they seldom or never go to church. Moreover, 90 percent of the elites were solidly pro-abortion.

The most politicized commentary on the March for Life was the piece by Michelle Boorstein in the *Washington Post*. She used the March as a platform to discuss the way activists who are not part of the pro-life movement are seeking to crash the event. Almost all of her 1018-word article was not on the big demonstration; rather, it was on the way the social justice crowd is trying to force its way into the pro-life rally.

I know of no social justice conference or event that has ever had any interest in welcoming pro-life speakers. But there are plenty of social justice groups, such as NETWORK, that refuse, as a matter of policy, to ever address abortion. Then there is the National Coalition of American Nuns, another social justice group: it is openly pro-abortion, and has been for decades. Pro-life Catholics need to take note.

VOTE SET ON HUMANE PRO-LIFE ACT



Bill Donohue comments on tomorrow's House vote on abortion:

To intentionally submit innocent children to deadly pain is morally unconscionable, yet there will be many elected

officials tomorrow who will vote against the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act. The bill would bar most, but not all, abortions beginning at 20 weeks of fetal age, or 22 weeks of pregnancy. There is scientific evidence that unborn children are capable of feeling pain at this age, hence the need to protect them from unnecessary trauma.

A year-and-a-half ago, a *Washington Post*-ABC poll found that 56 percent of the public was in favor of unrestricted abortions up to 20 weeks, but not after that period; 27 percent would allow them up to 24 weeks. A Quinnipiac University survey conducted two months ago found 60 percent who favored banning almost all abortions after 20 weeks. In short, while most of the public is conflicted about abortion, most men and women draw the line when it comes to allowing the unborn child to feel pain. This legislation, then, is simply affirming what most Americans want to see inscribed in law.

Faith in Public Life, which is greased by George Soros (he is a rabid pro-abortion donor), is now seeking to hijack tomorrow's March for Life by contending that immigration reform should be seen as the moral equivalent of abortion. This same group, which rejects every legislative effort to restrict abortions, cannot marshal anywhere near the same number of protesters, so it wants to piggy-back off of the success of pro-life Catholics.

It is striking that 31 Catholic university presidents signed a letter by Faith in Public Life making the immigration-abortion analogy. It will be published tomorrow in *Politico*. Even if we concede that immigration reform is a legitimate pro-life issue, this does not justify efforts to dilute the overriding significance of abortion, an act so morally outrageous that it is properly regarded by the Catholic Church as "intrinsically evil."

MAHER CURSES THE POPE



Bill Donohue comments on what Bill Maher said last Friday night on his HBO show about the pope:

Pope Francis implores us not to insult other people's religions, and Bill Maher responds by saying, "He's dead to me now. Oh yeah, F*** the Pope."

Maher can say what he wants about me—he went off on me big time—but to resort to obscene language condemning the pope is a new low, even for him.

Maher is showing signs that he is deeply disturbed: It is not normal for anyone to lash out at the Holy Father for simply asking us to show respect for others. It is also not normal that such vile commentary be treated as if it had comedic value.

The media blackout of this ugly episode is telling. Not a single mainstream media outlet mentioned Maher's vicious attack, and even the reaction from second and third tier sources was mostly mute.

In 1992, Sinead O'Connor went on "Saturday Night Live" and ripped up a picture of Pope John Paul II, saying, "fight the real enemy." Her antic occasioned a serious outburst of criticism. What Maher did on Friday was far worse, but it triggered no response. When outrageous behavior is greeted

with indifference, we are going down the wrong road. History bears me out.

We will send this news release to officials at HBO, as well as to those who work at its parent company, Time Warner. Why they would want to be associated with a man like Maher anymore defies rational explanation.

Contact Keith Coccozza, Senior VP Communications, Time Warner:
Keith.Coccozza@timewarner.com

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POPE'S "PUNCH" QUIP AND MORE



Bill Donohue contrasts media reaction to some comments made by Pope Francis aboard the papal plane in 2013 and 2015.

When the pope was on a plane coming back from Brazil in 2013, he said, "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?" Over 900 news stories quickly appeared, the majority of which were dishonest: "Who am I to judge?" was all they quoted. Pundits were even worse: they said the pope was asking us to be non-judgmental about homosexuality.

By contrast, today's newspapers give scant coverage to what

the pope said yesterday about the Paris murders. The pope said, "In freedom of expression there are limits." He condemned the Paris murders, but he also condemned the needless provocations. "You cannot provoke. You cannot insult the faith of others." As an example, he said that if his friend, Dr. Alberto Gasparri, were "to use a curse word against my mother, he can expect a punch. It's normal."

The disparity in news coverage can be explained on ideological grounds: the media liked what the pope said on the plane to Rome two years ago but they did not like what he said yesterday aboard the plane to the Philippines. The reaction of pundits to his "punch" quip is not ideological: it offended many conservatives as well as liberals.

What explains the pundits' reaction? Humorlessness. A video of the pope's remarks shows him standing up, microphone in hand, with Dr. Gasparri standing to his right. The pope is clearly jesting—he feigns a punch at him as he makes his quip. Gasparri was cracking up, as were others. But to the humorless, he committed a grave sin. They need to get a life. Too many conservatives are just as stiff as liberals these days.

What the pope said, and how he said it, is not hard to understand. He was simply stating the obvious: when we intentionally and needlessly insult people, don't be shocked when it triggers a strong response. That's common sense, a property that is not at all common these days.

POPE SIDES WITH CATHOLIC

LEAGUE

- ✘ Bill Donohue comments on remarks made by Pope Francis today on board the papal plane to the Philippines:

Pope Francis condemned the killings of the Paris cartoonists, but he also drew a line in the sand. "You cannot provoke. You cannot insult the faith of others. You cannot make fun of the faith." While he denounced violence against those who offend us, he also said that if his friend, Dr. Alberto Gasparri, the organizer of papal trips, were "to use a curse word against my mother, he can expect a punch. It's normal." He added, "We cannot make a toy out of the religion of others. These people provoke and then [something can happen]. In freedom of expression there are limits."

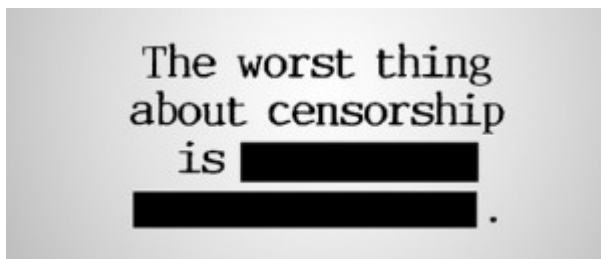
I am obviously delighted that the pope has taken the same position I have on this issue. Radio chatterbox Hugh Hewitt doubted last week whether a single bishop would side with me. What does he have to say now?

Regarding the pope's quip about punching those who offend us, here is what I said to Megyn Kelly last week: "If a woman has been beaten by her husband for 20 years and one day she goes out and she blows his brains out, I think we're going to say she's a murderer and we ought to try her. On the other hand any sensible person would say why don't we look at the whole issue here."

Mindless comments have exploded over this issue. Yesterday, Salman Rushdie told an audience at the University of Vermont, "The minute I hear someone say, 'Yes, I believe in freedom of speech, but...I stop listening.'" Similarly, Victor Davis Hanson criticizes me today for my "de facto attack on unfettered free speech." Apparently, both of these sages are opposed to laws that prohibit libel, slander, treasonous speech, harassing phone calls, copyright infringements, false advertising, etc.

Even worse is *USA Today*. After I explicitly rejected its request to write an op-ed defending blasphemy laws in the Middle East, the paper ran an excerpt of my remarks as an opposing view to its opposition to these laws. This is more than mindless—it is malicious.

MEET THE REAL CENSORS



Bill Donohue comments on who the real censors are:

On October 13, 1998, I held a demonstration in the street outside the theater that hosted "Corpus Christi," the Terrence McNally play that depicted Christ having sex with the apostles. I did not seek to have the government censor the play, but there was a protest of my right to protest the play. The *New York Times* commented on my demonstration: "The protest began with a fiery speech from William A. Donohue, the president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. Holding a bullhorn inside an area barricaded by the police, Mr. Donohue shouted criticisms at the opposition. 'You are the real authoritarians at heart,' he said. 'We're the ones that believe in tolerance, not you phonies.'"

The *Times* noted that I assembled 2,000 people on a rainy night and was greeted by a counterdemonstration of 300. Who protested my right to protest? People for the American Way, the National Coalition Against Censorship, PEN American Center and Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. They wanted to censor me.

In 2001, when Indiana University-Purdue University hosted "Corpus Christi," I was asked to join 11 state lawmakers and local residents in a lawsuit against the university. I refused to do so, citing my objections to censorship. Instead, I asked the school's chancellor to allow the distribution of a statement I wrote objecting to the play, making sure that all attendees got a copy. He agreed. That's how I operate.

Here's how cultural fascists operate: the University of Maine initially banned candy canes on campus last month because they remind people of Christmas. In previous years, schools have prohibited students from talking about Christmas at the "Winter Party," banned students from exchanging Christmas cards, and censored the singing of "Silent Night."

If anyone wants to meet the real censors, he should visit his local schools, especially institutions of higher learning. Or contact liberal free speech organizations.

INVENTING CONTROVERSY



Bill Donohue comments on a Religion News Service story today by David Gibson on the Paris murders:

"In finding no justification for the deaths of the Charlie Hebdo editorial staff, [Cardinal Timothy] Dolan *seemed* to part ways with another prominent New York Catholic, Bill Donohue of

the Catholic League, who *essentially* said the newspaper editors had brought on their own slaughter” (my italics). The verbs dropped by Gibson are telling: he can’t quite state that the New York Archbishop parts ways with me on this subject, so he infers that we have. Moreover, he infers that I blamed the victims. I will offer a more manly rejoinder.

- “Killing in response to insult, no matter how gross, must be unequivocally condemned.” That was the first sentence I wrote on this issue. (January 7)
- The next day I wrote that “the murderers are fully responsible for what they did and should be treated with the full force of the law. Nothing justifies the killing of these people.”
- “The only people who are responsible here are the murderers, the Muslim barbarians.” I said this to Megyn Kelly on January 8 on her Fox News show, “The Kelly File.”
- “Now who is responsible? The Muslim thugs are responsible.” I said this to Don Lemon on his CNN show on January 9.

I could go on and on. Evidently Gibson, and others, have a problem understanding why there is nothing inconsistent about fingering the Muslim murderers as responsible for the crime, and discussing the irresponsible record of those who deliberately and persistently insulted Muslims. That such an unremarkable distinction is greeted as an expression of cognitive dissonance speaks volumes about the thinking processes of my critics.

There is enough controversy over this issue without inventing more of it.