

A TOUGH WEEK FOR SECULARISTS



Bill Donohue comments on some setbacks for secular activists:

It's been a tough week for secular activists, with advances for religious freedom and school choice, and a new Pew Research survey showing a majority of Americans want a religious believer as president.

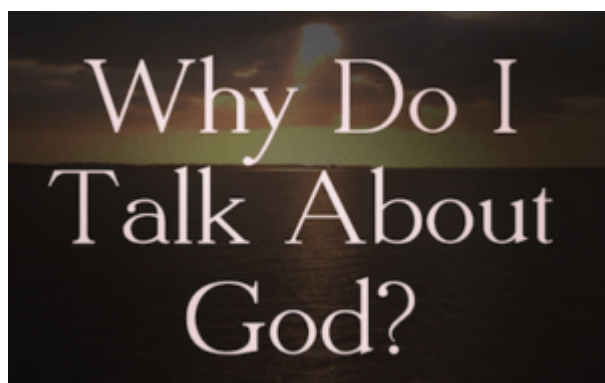
In Kentucky, a federal judge ruled that the state could not deny a sales tax rebate to a Christian group, Answers in Genesis (AiG) for a theme park it is constructing featuring a life-size Noah's Ark replica. Since the park will be a "for-profit" enterprise, it is entitled to the sales tax rebate like any other for-profit business in the state, said U.S. District Judge Gregory Van Tatenhove. To deny it would amount to pressuring AiG "to give up its religious beliefs, purpose or practice in order to receive a government benefit," the judge said. AiG president Ken Ham said "The law is crystal clear that the state cannot discriminate against a Christian group simply because of its viewpoint." The ruling was a defeat for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, which continues to oppose the rebate for AiG.

This week is National School Choice Week. In Tennessee, Gov. Bill Halsam's bill to provide such choice, in the form of educational vouchers for parents of children in low performing public schools, advanced through a crucial House committee. Americans United opposes this bill, because many (though not all) of the private school alternatives are faith-based. Americans United would keep children trapped in failing public schools rather than allow them to choose a quality education in a faith-based school.

Tonight, a group of atheists will gather in protest outside the Republican presidential debate in Des Moines, Iowa. They are dismayed that “a growing number of presidential candidates are basing much of their candidacy on their religious beliefs.” Presumably they are even more dismayed by the latest Pew Survey showing that 51 percent of Americans would be less likely to vote for a candidate who does not believe in God. Only six percent would be more likely to vote for such a candidate.

All in all, it was a tough week for secularists—and a very good one for believers—from a federal courthouse, to a state legislature, to the public square.

CANDIDATES LOVE “GOD TALK”



Bill Donohue comments on the presidential candidates and religion:

Looks like they’ve all discovered “God talk.” This includes Bernie Sanders, a devout secularist. He eschews religious ties, though even he says, “I think everyone believes in God in their own way.” Hillary Clinton, who has never been known for her strong religious convictions, told a tiny group of Iowans yesterday that religion “is very important to me.” She did not elaborate.

Last week Donald Trump told a Liberty University audience that

“Christianity [is] under siege.” Yet he still refuses to address an anti-Catholic tweet made by his chief spokesperson, Katrina Pierson [click [here](#)]. Now Trump is set to be introduced to a crowd this weekend by Rev. Robert Jeffress, another Protestant who has made anti-Catholic remarks. In 2010, he accused the Catholic Church of doing the work of Satan [click [here](#)]. Trump now needs to address Jeffress as well.

Jeb Bush sounded very much like Trump last year when he told a Liberty University audience that Christianity is under attack as “something static, narrow and outdated.” Yesterday, he questioned Trump’s veracity. When asked if he thought Trump was a Christian, he said, “No, I don’t know what he is.” Is Bush now calling Trump a liar? He provided no evidence to back up his comment.

Marco Rubio has played musical chairs with religion: He has been a Catholic, a Mormon, and an evangelical Protestant; now he says he is a Catholic again. However, he doesn’t drop the word “Catholicism” when talking to his followers; he prefers to speak about Christianity. Ted Cruz speaks “God talk” better than others, and notes that his father, Rafael, is a pastor. Catholics take note: Rev. Cruz has accused the Catholic Church of “crossing their hands and doing nothing” about the Holocaust [click [here](#)]. In fact, no institution did more to undermine Hitler than the Catholic Church. Mr. Cruz should address his father’s ignorant smear.

“God talk” doesn’t cut it. Sincerity does.

JERRY FALWELL Jr. CHOOSES TRUMP



Bill Donohue comments on the endorsement of Donald Trump by Jerry Falwell Jr.:

Good for Donald Trump—he has Jerry Falwell Jr. in his corner. I do not know the president of Liberty University but I knew his father; we had a cordial relationship. Now that Trump has lined up his support among evangelical notables, perhaps he can address his problem with Catholics.

Trump has no record of anti-Catholicism, but the same cannot be said of his campaign spokeswoman, Katrina Pierson. She has derided Catholics (click [here](#)) and has yet to apologize. We need to hear from Trump about this matter—the sooner the better.

For the record, though I am a conservative, I am neither Republican nor Democrat; I am happily Independent. One reason I am is because not a presidential election season goes by without someone connected to a candidate saying something offensive about Catholicism. Moreover, in this case, it should be known that I am not one of those conservatives who hates Donald Trump.

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“CRUX” MISREPORTS POPE’S WORDS



Covering all things Catholic

Bill Donohue comments on what “Crux” reported yesterday:

Any media outlet devoted to Catholicism is expected to accurately report what the pope says. Unfortunately, the Vatican correspondent for “Crux,” Inés San Martín, says that Pope Francis told an audience of Christians yesterday that he “asked for forgiveness for Catholic persecution of other Christian churches,” and that he did so once before in 2014. But a closer look at what he actually said shows her bias.

Pope Francis did not use the word “persecution.” He asked for “forgiveness for the behavior of Catholics towards Christians,” but he never accused them of “persecution.” He added, “At the same time, I invite all Catholic brothers and sisters to forgive if they, today or in the past, have been offended by other Christians.”

AP, Religion News Service, and the Catholic News Service did a better job than “Crux.” None said the pope was asking for forgiveness for any alleged “persecutions.”

The 2014 comment that Martín cites was in reference to fascists in Italy under Mussolini who persecuted Pentecostals. The pope rightfully acknowledged that “some were Catholics.” That is altogether different from blaming the entire Catholic Church.

There is a tendency among some Catholics to engage in breast-beating, always looking for the dark side of their religion. This self-righteous exercise is not helpful, especially when it comes from journalists.

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TRUMP'S SPOKESWOMAN MUST APOLOGIZE



Bill Donohue comments on a remark made by Donald Trump's national spokeswoman, Katrina Pierson:

On December 18, 2011, Katrina Pierson sent the following tweet:

"Just saw a commercial from Catholic Church stating that Catholic Church was started by Jesus. I bet they believe that too."

No one makes a comment like this without harboring an animus against Catholicism. It would be instructive to learn more about Pierson's thoughts on the subject. Perhaps she can share them with us.

In the meantime, Pierson needs to apologize to Catholics for making such a snide remark. We would also like to hear assurances from Donald Trump that he will not tolerate anti-Catholicism in his campaign.

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BILL MAHER OFFENDS YET AGAIN



Bill Donohue comments on Bill Maher's latest assault on decency:

When serial anti-Catholic bigots Bill Maher and Seth MacFarlane get together, it is a sure fire recipe for new lows in tastelessness. And that's what we got on HBO last Friday night, as MacFarlane appeared on "Real Time with Bill Maher."

"...you're so lucky that you do cartoons," Maher told the creator of Fox's "Family Guy," "because the things you get away with in cartoons—I'm so jealous of ..."

The example he chose, predictably, was the repugnant Dec. 7, 2014 episode of "Family Guy." Titled, "The 2000-Year-Old-Virgin," it defiled Jesus. "I saw your show, it was a repeat, I know," Maher recounted. "Jesus was f**king Peter's wife, but it was a scam. He was f**king a lot of people's wives—and this was your Christmas show." Maher, MacFarlane and the "Real Time" audience then shared a good laugh.

MacFarlane has offended Catholics numerous times before, from repeatedly mocking the Eucharist, to slandering gay priests, to promoting dishonest myths about the Inquisition. And Maher's constant anti-Catholic rantings would of course fill

pages—as they do in our annual reports. Yet HBO and its parent company, Time Warner, continue to proudly feature his show, making them fully culpable in his bigotry and that of his guests.

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ABORTION SURVIVORS MATTER



In the current issue of *Catalyst*, the Catholic League journal, Bill Donohue ran an excerpt of testimony given by Melissa Ohden last September before the House Judiciary Committee. Her mother tried to

abort her, but the “procedure” failed.

In commemoration of the March for Life, we are making available this selection of what the founder of Abortion Survivors Network told the congressional committee.

To read it, click [here](#).

NEBRASKA BISHOPS RIP GENDER

IDEOLOGY



Bill Donohue comments on a statement issued by Nebraska bishops opposing a gender identity policy pushed by a state organization:

The Nebraska National School Activities Association has voted—against the express will of a majority of its districts—to allow transgender participation in high school sports and other activities. The three Nebraska Catholic bishops are opposed to this decision, and are asking the association’s representative assembly to overturn it on April 8.

If the ruling is not overturned, it would mean that boys who think they are girls could compete against girls in sports, and vice versa. The bishops called attention to the undemocratic nature of the decision, but their most pithy remarks addressed the core issue: gender dysphoria.

“Any person who experiences gender dysphoria is entitled to the respect and dignity that is the right of every human person,” the bishops said. But they added that such concerns “must be provided with due consideration to fairness and the safety, privacy, and rights of all students.” They did not avoid what is really at stake.

Referring to the ruling, the bishops said, “It would be unjust to allow a harmful and deceptive gender ideology to shape either what is taught or how activities are conducted in our schools.” They said it would have a “negative impact” on students, especially their attitudes towards “the fundamental nature of the human person and the family.”

The bishops are right: This ruling transcends sports. It invites boys and girls to think that their sexual differences, grounded in nature, are malleable. They are not—they are constitutive of who we are. “Gender” refers to socially learned roles governing the sexes, cues which are taken from nature, and are largely ratified by culture. To wit: It is not culture that makes boys more aggressive than girls—it’s their testosterone level.

Pope Francis has said, “Gender ideology is demonic!” Yes, by confusing boys and girls about what nature, and nature’s God, has ordained, only trouble can follow.

TRUMP VOWS TO “PROTECT CHRISTIANITY”



Bill Donohue comments on remarks made yesterday by Donald Trump at Liberty University:

Trump went on a tear yesterday. “We’re going to protect Christianity,” he said. This needs to be done because “Christianity is under siege.” He noted that in Syria, “if you’re Christian, they’re chopping heads, they’re under siege!”

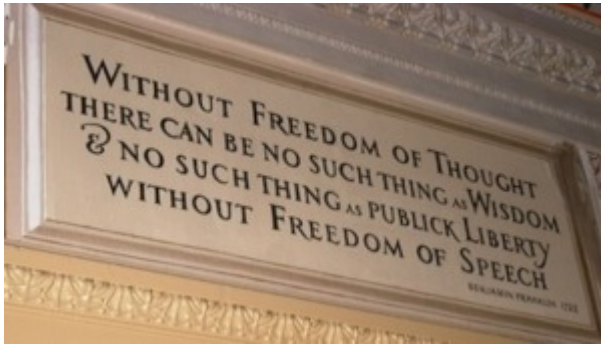
Aside from addressing the “War on Christmas,” all of Trump’s references to protecting Christianity were to conditions in the Middle East. He could have said more about threats to

Christianity at home, beginning with the Obama administration's Health and Human Services mandate. Attempts by the federal government to redefine what constitutes a Catholic entity are pernicious, and so are efforts to force them to assent to healthcare plans that fund abortion-inducing drugs.

Virtually all the presidential candidates understand that Christianity is endangered in the Middle East, but few have noted that it is being trashed at home. In the schools, the multicultural curriculum frequently shines a negative light on Christianity (while elevating Islam). On television and in the movies, Christianity is more often denigrated than respected. In the arts, depictions of Christianity are too often crude and morally debased. Moreover, radical secularism is in high gear among activist organizations seeking to neuter Christianity's influence on our culture. Regrettably, the courts have shown a propensity to favor establishment clause considerations over religious liberty interests. And so on.

Is Trump serious about his commitment to religious liberty? Who knows? He can survive criticism over his Corinthians misstatement (it's Second Corinthians, not Two Corinthians), but his comments on forgiveness are more important. NPR reports that last year Trump told Iowa evangelicals "he had never asked God for forgiveness...and he repeated that Sunday on CNN." Wrong. He said on CNN, "I don't like to have to ask for forgiveness." This is profoundly different from what NPR said. In fact, even last year he commented, "I am not sure I have" asked God for forgiveness. In short, more spin from a hostile media.

OSCAR VOTERS LACK DIVERSITY



Bill Donohue comments on the profile of Oscar voters:

Al Sharpton is angry that for two years in a row, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences did not nominate any black actors. "Hollywood is like the Rocky Mountains," he said, "the higher up you get the whiter it gets." He added that Hollywood has a "fraudulent image of progressive and liberal politics and policies."

Is Sharpton right? We know from a *Los Angeles Times* poll that Oscar voters are 94 percent white. We also know that they are 76 percent male and that their average age is 63. They are also heavily Jewish. Writing in the *Jewish Journal*, Abe Fried-Tanzer says, "It is no secret that there are Jews all over Hollywood." Indeed, the *Jewish Forward* says it is merely a "sociological observation" to note that "Jews run Hollywood."

Is there a problem that Oscar voters are mostly older Jewish guys? Yes, but not because they are older, or white, or Jewish: it's because their values, which are decidedly liberal-left, are not representative of the American public. As such, traditional-minded persons are severely underrepresented in the voting process.

When we speak of diversity, too much attention is given to anatomy and ancestry. What counts is diversity of thought, not sex or race. The same problem exists on college campuses: those who hold conservative values are in small supply.

Regarding the Jewish element, I would personally prefer a

Hollywood run by Jews such as Michael Medved and Dennis Prager than I would one run by Catholics such as the Cuomos, Pelosis, or Kennedys.

Sharpton is right to complain about the lack of diversity in Hollywood, but he is wrong to focus on biological criteria—the real problem is in the mindset of the voters. Only when we can be sure that practicing Catholics, evangelical Protestants, observant Jews, Mormons, and others have a representative seat at the table can Hollywood escape the rap that it is hypocritical.