

RELIGIOUS AMERICANS ARE PRO-TRUMP

Catholic League President Bill Donohue comments on a new Pew Research Center poll on religion:

On June 20, Pew Research Center released the findings of a new poll on President Trump's job performance. It found that 39 percent of the public approves of his performance in office, while 55 percent disapproves. But among those who attend church weekly or more the respective figures are 48 percent and 45 percent. This suggests that it is secularists who are driving down his approval ratings.

Among white non-Hispanic evangelical Protestants, Trump wins the approval of 74 percent; 20 percent disapprove. Among white non-Hispanic Catholics, he wins the support of 52 percent; 42 percent disapprove.

Overall, 48 percent of Protestants approve of the president's performance, while 45 percent disapprove. Among Catholics, the figures are 38 percent and 56 percent. The drop-off in support overall is clearly due to the Hispanic input. Here's more proof.

White non-Hispanics, independent of religious affiliation, approve of Trump's handling of the job by a margin of 50 percent to 44 percent. But among Hispanics, the figures are 20 percent and 72 percent, respectively.

Trump's lack of support among Hispanics is well known, but more controversial is his support among the faithful. To take a line from President Bill Clinton, he feels their pain.

Two weeks ago, President Trump told religious Americans that the "bitter voices" of elites are responsible for the "hatred" and "prejudice" toward religion. Saying the faithful are

“under siege,” he vowed to “put a stop to the attacks on religion,” pledging to “end discrimination against people of faith.”

This is a welcome change from the Obama years where the executive branch used its powers to challenge the autonomy of churches and religious non-profits. The faithful are taking note, redounding to the favor of President Trump.

With regard to the role of religion, two conclusions seem plain. One, religious Americans like the president. Two, secularists don't like him. A third conclusion, based on other data, is also warranted: militant secular activists are the “bitter voices” of hatred and prejudice against the faithful.

This is one more reason why the culture war is not going away, and why practicing Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Mormons, and Muslims must stand up to the bullies who are leading the attacks against them.

ATHEIST CHRISTIAN HATERS WIN IN COURT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a First Amendment case that dealt a blow to religious liberty:

For 75 years, Bayview Park, in a Pensacola, Florida neighborhood, has been home to a large cross. The 1941 wooden cross, erected by a New Deal agency, was replaced by a civic group in 1969 with a 34-foot concrete “Latin cross.” No one complained until recently. On June 19, a federal judge ordered it to be taken down.

U.S. District Judge Roger Vinson was sympathetic to the Christians who wanted the cross to stay, but felt he had no choice but to rule against them.

“Thousands upon thousands,” he noted, made their way each year to attend Easter services and to commemorate Veteran’s Day and Memorial Day. But this mattered not a whit to the militant atheists at the Freedom From Religion Foundation and the American Humanist Association: they filed suit claiming the cross violated the First Amendment.

The claims made by the atheists are transparently dishonest, and the ruling by Judge Vinson is proof positive that the U.S. Supreme Court has created mass confusion on this issue.

Plaintiff Amanda Kondrat’yev said she first encountered the cross while walking through Bayview Park with a friend in 2008 or 2009. Here is what the lawsuit said:

“She was immediately affronted by the government’s enormous Christian cross display and expressed feelings of shock to her friend as soon as they saw the imposing Christian symbol. She has had unwelcome contact with the Bayview Cross approximately thirty times since....The giant cross in Bayview Park significantly impedes [her] use and enjoyment of the local park. Due to the presence of the Bayview Cross, and its enormous size, [she] finds it difficult, if not impossible, to fully enjoy the park.”

This account strains credulity. How in the world did she know that the Bayview Cross wasn’t erected on government leased land and was paid for by private sources? More important, would it have made any difference if it were privately owned and on leased land? After all, the “shock” at seeing an “enormous,” “imposing,” and “giant” cross would surely be enough to “significantly impede”—if not make it “impossible”—for her to enjoy the park.

It is obvious that militant atheists hate the sight of the

cross. Nor can it be doubted that some vomit upon seeing it. They need help, but not the kind granted by the federal courts.

Judge Vinson knows the history of the First Amendment's religious liberty provision well. Indeed, he cites Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story's observation, made in his classic treatise on the Constitution in 1851, that the Founders believed that "Christianity ought to receive encouragement from the State," and that attempts to "level all religions, and to make it a matter of state policy to hold all in utter indifference, would have created universal disapprobation, if not universal indignation."

This is why Judge Vinson maintains that "the historical record indicates that the Founding Fathers did not intend for the Establishment Clause to ban crosses and religious symbols from public property." Nonetheless, he feels constrained by more recent Supreme Court decisions. The problem here, as he readily acknowledges, is the lack of clarity coming from the high court.

Judge Vinson cites one important case, *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, as crafting a three-prong test to decide the constitutionality of religious liberty cases. He correctly notes that this 1971 decision has "not [been] consistently used." In fact, he says the lower court rulings have been a "hodgepodge," leading to much "confusion." But because *Lemon* is still law, he says, "I am not free to ignore it." He comes to this conclusion even after acknowledging, in a footnote, that *Lemon* "has occasionally been bypassed or ignored by the Supreme Court."

Judge Vinson ends with a plea to the Supreme Court to "revisit and reconsider its Establishment Clause jurisprudence." If it doesn't, we will continue to see more phony cases brought by atheist Christian-hating activists feigning "shock" at seeing crosses in parks.

TRUMP SCORES BY OKAYING DREAMERS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on President Trump's decision to recognize the Dreamers:

President Trump is going to shield from deportation those young people who were brought to the United States illegally by their parents, the so-called Dreamers. He is to be commended for doing so.

In the decision announced late yesterday, the president has made good on his pledge, made two months ago, that he is "not after the Dreamers." Indeed, he said in April, "The dreamers should rest easy." Pointedly, he drew a bright line between those young people who did not willfully break the law, and others. He made it clear that "we are after the criminals."

President Trump was in office for just over a month when he rethought the position he took as a presidential candidate. "To me, it's one of the most difficult subjects I have," he said, "because you have these incredible kids."

The ruling, which was announced by Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly, means that 750,000 young people will not be deported, though they are not being granted residency status. If one of the Dreamers commits a crime, he could have his status revoked.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops will cheer this decision. On December 22, 2016, Bishop Joe Vásquez, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Migration, supported legislation to protect the Dreamers.

But not everyone will be happy—anti-Catholics such as Ann Coulter will be livid. Every time anyone in the Catholic Church speaks about immigration, she goes off the bat.

In September 2015, after Pope Francis said that immigrants helped build the United States, Coulter said, “This is why the Founders distrusted Catholics.” She added that the Catholic Church was “largely built by pedophiles.” In April 2016, she accused the pope of running “a huge multinational that protects subordinates when they rape little boys.”

This is who Ann Coulter is: she is a raging anti-Catholic bigot. It’s about time conservatives stopped defending her. She has more in common with the likes of Kathy Griffin than she does rank-and-file conservatives.

Kudos to President Trump. Now he has the moral capital to do what most Americans want him to do—go after the thugs who are here illegally.

PEW STUDY MINIMALIZES CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a new Pew Research Center study of global religious restrictions:

Most studies that measure attacks on religion speak about religious persecution. A Pew Research Center article released June 9, based on a Pew study that was published in April, takes a different tack: it provides data on religious groups that have been “harassed or intimidated.”

It does not address the severity or frequency of the

harassment, and therefore “the results should not be interpreted as gauging which religious group faces the most harassment or persecution around the world.”

This is an honest description of the study’s goal. But the decision to skirt which religious groups are the most persecuted—and to eschew an account of who is doing the persecution—is a serious omission. It would be like doing a report on crime by focusing on misdemeanors to the neglect of felonies.

The study also fails to define with any precision what it means by “social hostilities”; it cites them as an index of harassment. Other studies do a better job on the subject of religious victimization.

The 2016 Annual Report issued by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom names nine nations as the most egregious violators of religious liberty in the world: they “torture or use cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.” Christians are persecuted in all of them.

Five of the persecuting nations are run by Muslims (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan); two are Communist dictatorships (China and North Korea); one is Buddhist run (Burma); and one is a secular tyranny (Eritrea).

We know from many studies of religious persecution that there are some undeniable facts. Here are three of them:

- There is no country in the world run by Christians that persecutes people of faith.
- There is no religious group more persecuted than Christians.
- There is no religious group that persecutes people of faith more than Muslims.

Any study that does not punctuate these facts is minimalizing Christian persecution; it also minimalizes the role played by

the victimizers, namely, Muslims and Communists.

The headline to the recent Pew article on the study is also problematic: "Christians Faced Widespread Harassment in 2015, but Mostly in Christian-Majority Countries."

It is misleading to say that Christians are harassed in mostly Christian-majority nations. It suggests that Christians are persecuting Christians, which is simply not true. Furthermore, the Pew study cites only two nations to back up its claim, Nicaragua and Eritrea. They are poor choices.

Nicaragua is not run by Christians—it is run by atheist left-wing dictators. Eritrea is not run by Christians either. Some studies say the nation is half Muslim and half Christian, while others say it is majority Muslim. No matter, it is not Christians who are doing the persecution.

The headline about Christians being harassed in mostly Christian-majority nations looks even more flatulent when we consider an analogy with South Africa. When it was a dictatorship, the South African rulers were white and the persecuted were black. Would it not be misleading to say that blacks were harassed in a black-majority nation?

Open Doors, a Christian entity, has done great work on this subject, though it is curiously not cited as a resource by Pew (it does cite the ADL). This is regrettable given the comprehensiveness of its reporting. Interestingly, it raised the issue about Christians being victimized in Christian-majority nations, providing an authoritative response.

Q: "Some of these countries have large Christian populations, yet they remain on the list. Why is that?"

A: "There are countries on the list which have a rather large Christian population and remain on the list for numerous reasons. In countries like Columbia, Christians face persecution from rebel groups in certain parts of the country.

While non-Christians also experience violence from these groups, Christian leaders are specifically targeted because many people have left the rebel groups after coming to Christ. The church is often seen as a threat by these groups because of this and is often attacked.”

There are other anomalies that should be considered. For example, there are nations such as Kenya which have a large Christian majority, yet in those areas that are dominated by Islam, they are persecuted.

Finally, a word about harassment. Many Catholics, as well as others, regard the Obama administration’s HHS mandate forcing Catholic non-profits to pay for abortion-inducing drugs in their healthcare plans as a classic example of government harassment of a religious group. There is no evidence that Pew does.

We have long praised the Pew Research Center for its work. This study did not meet its usual standard of excellence.

LANCE BERKMAN’S RELIGIOUS RIGHTS ATTACKED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on gay activists who are attacking the free speech and religious liberty rights of former St. Louis Cardinals player Lance Berkman:

Not too long ago it would be considered perverse to say that men have a right to use the restrooms and shower facilities reserved for women. Today, the reverse is true. Ask Lance Berkman, the former St. Louis Cardinals slugger.

The St. Louis Cardinals has hosted Christian Day for nearly three decades, and this year, as in the past, they have invited Berkman. But because he is opposed to men and women using the bathrooms and shower facilities of the opposite sex—it's almost always cross-dressing men who want to crash the ladies room—the Cardinals are being condemned by homosexuals and other sexual minorities.

Even sports columnists have gotten into the act. Bill Baer of NBC Sports writes that "In September 2015, Berkman foolishly advocated against public accommodations for transgender people to use public bathrooms," saying such persons were "troubled men."

There is nothing "foolish" about supporting the privacy rights of women, but there is something seriously wrong about objections to it. Two years ago, Berkman walked back his comment about transgender persons being "troubled men," though there was no good reason why he should have.

He clarified his remark saying, "The issue is, what to do about a 15 or 16-year-old boy who thinks he's a girl and wants to shower with the girls? Maybe he is [transgender], maybe he's confused. But I wouldn't want him in the shower with my daughters."

What Berkman said is common sense and a tribute to common decency. No normal father would want his high school daughter showering with a boy. But we live in an age where the sacred and the profane have switched places, and common sense has all but collapsed.

When Berkman was asked about a person who identifies with the opposite sex, he said, "You're taking their word for it, saying that's the way they're born...maybe there's a science that backs that up. I don't know."

There is no science to back this nonsense up. Dr. Lawrence S. Mayer is an epidemiologist trained in psychiatry, and Dr. Paul

R. McHugh is one of the nation's preeminent psychiatrists; the former is scholar in residence in the Department of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and the latter was psychiatrist-in-chief at the Johns Hopkins Hospital for 25 years, and is a colleague of Mayer in the same department.

They have researched sexuality for decades, and their findings on transgender persons are revealing. "The hypothesis that gender identity is an innate, fixed property of human beings that is independent of biological sex—that a person might be 'a man trapped in a woman's body' or 'a woman trapped in a man's body'—is not supported by scientific evidence." Their conclusion is based on empirical data, not politics.

These are important points, but they are not the most critical.

There are two reasons why Berkman deserves to be defended. One, he is exercising his free speech rights, and nothing he has said is untoward. Second, his religious rights are paramount.

Regarding the latter, when asked to explain his position, Berkman said he felt it necessary "to stand up for Christ." And for this some want him silenced! Sadly, our society is no longer committed to the First Amendment as it once was.

Religious leaders across faith lines have a moral duty to support Berkman and beat back the forces of censorship. If we don't stand with those who "stand up for Christ," we are the problem.

NEW YORK TIMES BACKS GORY TRUMP-LIKE “CAESAR”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an offensive play funded by the *New York Times*:

New York’s Public Theater has decided to malign the president and his wife in its production of “Julius Caesar.” The Shakespeare in the Park play opens today at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park.

It depicts President Trump as Caesar—the dress and iconography are unmistakable—and Melania as Caesar’s wife Calpurnia, complete with a Slavic accent. Trump/Caesar is brutally assassinated.

Delta and Bank of America both withdrew their sponsorship of the play, saying that it crossed the line. But the *New York Times* is standing fast, citing its allegiance to free speech. “As an institution that believes in free speech for the arts as well as the media,” the newspaper said, “we support the right of the Public Theater to stage the production as they chose.”

This is a lie. The *New York Times* is standing by the play because it likes it—it has nothing to do with its alleged commitment to free speech. I will prove it.

On February 29, 2016, the *New York Times* ran an op-ed page ad I wrote blasting Disney-ABC for airing a TV show, “The Real O’Neals,” based on the life of Dan Savage, an obscene anti-Catholic. It was not the ad I wanted—I settled for it after my initial submission was rejected. Click [here](#) to read the ad the *Times* would not print.

The *Times* explained its decision to nix my ad saying, “the use of off color examples of Mr. Savage’s quotes, still leaves our

readers with the offensive comments of Mr. Savage, less a vulgar word or two. Even with the particular vulgarities reduced to astericks [sic], the comments are still too off color for this newspaper. It's like telling a dirty joke, and using asterisks for the offensive words. The joke will still be offensive to our readers."

Now how about them apples! The *New York Times* put on its Victorian hat by refusing to offend its readers with Dan Savage's vulgarities, but it has no qualms about sponsoring a vulgar assault on President Trump and his wife Melania.

The *Times* has every right to establish its house rules, and we have every right to call them out for being rank hypocrites.

Contact Dean Baquet, executive editor: dean.baquet@nytimes.com

AMERICANS REJECT ROE v. WADE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a new Gallup poll on abortion:

The American people are against *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion. In a Gallup poll released today, a clear majority—54 percent—say abortion should be illegal or legal in only a few circumstances. That is a stark rebuke to *Roe v. Wade*, which effectively legalized abortion through term, and for any reason whatsoever.

By a margin of 49 percent to 43 percent, Americans believe that abortion is "morally wrong." That is also testament to the support for the pro-life position. While slightly more Americans identify as pro-choice (49 percent) than pro-life (46 percent), it is more telling that almost half consider

abortion to be “morally wrong” (self-identification is largely a function of social pressure, an outcome shaped by cultural elites).

Lawmakers in the states are tapping into this pro-life sentiment. Texas Governor Greg Abbott recently signed legislation that bans D&E (dilation and evacuation) abortions, and Missouri Governor Eric Greitens has called back lawmakers to work on new pro-life measures. This is an example of the Trump Effect, a welcome change from the pro-abortion policies of President Obama.

This battle in the culture war must continue, and pleas to become passive must be resisted. There is too much at stake—the kids need our defense—to do otherwise.

NETFLIX GETS DIRTY WITH KIDS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue sent the following letter today to Netflix CEO Reed Hastings asking his wife to intervene in a disturbing matter:

June 9, 2017

Mr. Reed Hastings
CEO, Netflix
100 Winchester Circle
Los Gatos, CA 95032

Dear Mr. Hastings:

Did your wife Patti Ann see Episode One of the Netflix show, “F is for Family,” the one where Greg, just back from making up with his wife Ginny—thanks to Father Pat—pulls a crucifix out of his pocket, asking the Lord for strength while chanting

“vagina, vagina, vagina”?

Did Patti Ann catch Episode Six where Greg and Ginny’s son, Kevin, is shown masturbating while staring at a candle with an image of Our Blessed Mother?

Did Patti Ann watch Episode Nine where it is suggested that Father Pat, who is gay, is a child molester? In the same episode, did she catch the scene where Greg fondles Jesus’ body on a crucifix, saying, “Oh, you’ve got a swimmer’s body”?

If Patti Ann saw these episodes, I would like to hear what she thinks about them. Since this is an animated show, would she recommend it to little kids? If she has not seen these episodes, please ask her to do so and get back to me.

Excuse me for personalizing this letter, but you Hollywood guys just don’t seem to give a damn when Catholics politely register an objection.

Sincerely,

William Donohue
President

GAY EMPLOYEE JUSTLY FIRED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a homosexual music director who lost in a U.S. District Court on June 7 in his bid to be reinstated in a Chicago parish:

Colin Collette knew what the house rules of the Catholic Church were before he announced his “engagement” to his boyfriend in 2014, so he should not have been surprised when the parish he worked for fired him. Francis Cardinal George,

then the Archbishop of Chicago, stated at the time that Collette was dismissed for his “participation in a form of union that cannot be recognized as a sacrament by the Church.”

Collette said that the district court ruling “flies in such contradiction to the wonderful things that are coming out of Rome. The pope is speaking about unity and love, and here we are creating a church of fear and division.”

This is a common error made by homosexual Catholics. Yes, Pope Francis is speaking about unity and love, but he is also opposed to gay marriage. Indeed, he once called it an attempt by “the father of lies” to “confuse and deceive the children of God.” In other words, this is the work of the Devil.

After the U.S. Supreme Court imposed gay marriage on the nation, Pope Francis noted that “unprecedented changes” were taking place in society. Specifically, he cited the “social, cultural—and now sadly juridical—effects on family bonds.”

Similarly, when Pope Francis spoke at the White House in 2015, he said “American Catholics are committed to building a society which is truly tolerant and inclusive, to safeguarding the rights of individuals and communities, and to rejecting every form of unjust discrimination.”

After he made those comments, the Internet was alive with headlines such as, “LGBT Catholics Alarmed With Pope’s Remarks About ‘Unjust Discrimination.’”

The *Catholic Catechism* commands us to respect homosexuals and to avoid “unjust discrimination” against them. To put it differently, it is one thing to maintain that all children of God are entitled to be loved and accepted, quite another to say that no distinctions should be made in policy and law regarding sexual orientation.

Unfortunately, this is seen as controversial, but it should not be: civil society discriminates all the time. For example,

I rode a subway this week and noticed an ad placed by the City of New York informing “women and minorities” that assistance was available to them if they want to start a small business. In other words, white guys were told that it was deemed just to discriminate against them (in this initiative as well as many others).

Other examples of just discrimination include denying the right of minors to vote and drink alcohol. We deny small people the right to ride the rollercoaster and men are denied discount drinks on “Ladies Night.” Only veterans are entitled to veteran’s benefits and 60 year-olds are denied Social Security.

The Catholic Church, unlike civil society, sees marriage as an institution between a man and a woman. So has the rest of the world—throughout all of history—until recently. Accordingly, the Church has every right not to acknowledge gay marriage any more than it is required to accept polygamy.

Those who believe in diversity should welcome the Catholic Church’s teachings on marriage, homosexuals, and “unjust discrimination.” It is what makes the U.S. such a diverse society—we really do stand out.

KATHY GRIFFIN STUNT BEARS FRUIT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue assesses the reaction to Kathy Griffin’s attempt at humor when she held a bloody head of President Trump:

The reaction against Kathy Griffin has been encouraging. It

means the public is still capable of being outraged and that lines of decency still exist. Too bad it took something this vulgar to ignite the pushback.

There are other issues related to this matter that should concern us. Comedians are rightfully given much latitude in delivering their script, but it is important to acknowledge that lines can be crossed. It is not just comedians who need to observe lines—so do civil rights organizations.

To be specific, the way the pop culture treats racial, ethnic, and religious groups is a concern for those civil rights organizations that represent their respective constituencies. From African Americans and Asians to Mormons and Muslims, their advocates have a duty to protest when a line has been crossed; they should also know when to back off. That is not easy, but it must be done.

Overreacting is as bad as underreacting. We at the Catholic League do our best to navigate between not being hypersensitive—lest we buy into the culture of political correctness—and being so inured to assaults on our sensibilities that we just learn to live with it. In other words, we need to know when to take a joke, and when to drop the flag.

The best example of a celebrity who knew how to push people's buttons—without insulting them—was Mel Brooks. He spared no demographic group. Yet he never felt the need to stick it to any of them. He knew the difference between a good-humored jab and a sucker-punch.

The way comedians are reacting to Griffin's stunt shows that Brooks' influence isn't lost altogether. Take the way Jerry Seinfeld, Jamie Foxx, Al Franken, and Jim Carrey have weighed in on the controversy.

Seinfeld said, "So someone told a bad joke—so what? I don't understand the big deal." But was it just another "bad joke,"

or did it cross the line? In his defense, he is at least consistent: he is on record condemning the political correctness that is ubiquitous on college campuses, so much so that comedians like him don't want to go there anymore.

Foxx said he still likes Griffin, but concedes that "She went past the line, she'll pay for it in the way she pays for it, and we'll go out and we'll laugh with her again." Importantly, he admits a line was crossed.

Franken said Griffin is his friend, and he will not walk away from her. Nevertheless, he allowed that she made a "horrible mistake." He also admits that a line was crossed. (By the way, true friends do not walk away from friends because they made a serious mistake—so good for Franken.)

Carrey said, "I think it is the job of a comedian to cross the line at all times." This man is a problem.

First, it is not the job of a comedian to cross the line: it is the job of a comedian to make people laugh. If a stand-up comic cannot do so without always crossing the line it means he is an amateur, someone time-frozen in his adolescence.

Second, Carrey is a phony. Most comedians, and that certainly includes him, never bash gays, so they don't have to worry about crossing that line. But they have a lot of practice bashing Catholics, and in the most vile and obscene ways.

Reasonable people can disagree where to draw the line, but only unreasonable people believe that none should exist. Carrey is a problem, and so are those who cannot distinguish between his reaction and the way Seinfeld, Foxx, and Franken responded.