

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION SPIKES

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a new report on Christian persecution:

All across the nation, students are learning about genocide committed in the twentieth century, yet most know next to nothing about genocide taking place right now. That's partly because the victims are Christians: many academics and journalists have become accustomed to seeing Christians as victimizers, not victims, thus leaving them unmoved when reports surface about genocide against the faithful.

["Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians Oppressed for their Faith, 2015-17,"](#) is a study released by Aid to the Church in Need, an organization chaired by George J. Marlin. Its findings are devastating.

"In 12 of the 13 countries reviewed," the report notes, "the situation for Christians was worse in overall terms in the period 2015-17 than within the preceding two years." Genocide has been recorded in Syria, Iraq, and northern Nigeria, either by ISIS or affiliates such as Boko Haram.

North Korea is singled out for persecuting Christians. Its atrocities include starvation, abortion, and hanging Christians on crosses over a fire; others were run over by steamrollers.

As usual, Muslim madmen go about killing converts in public, and they do so with impunity. This is in line with the stated goal of Islamists, namely, the "eradication of Christians, and other minorities." In Sudan, the killing is orchestrated by the government.

One of the report's most salient findings, which deserves greater attention, is something that Catholics, and indeed all Christians, need to confront. "The defeat of Daesh [ISIS] and

other Islamists in major strongholds of the Middle East offers the last hope of recovery for Christian groups threatened with extinction.”

Notice that the report did not say that more dialogue is needed: it said ISIS must be crushed. That is a glum, yet realistic, conclusion; it is certainly supported by the evidence.

Now that ISIS is on the run throughout the Middle East, the time to finish the job is more important than ever before. As the report says, “Many [Christians] would not survive another similar violent attack.”

This report deserves a wide audience.

RELIGION AND MORALITY RECONSIDERED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on two new surveys on religion and morality:

A survey by Statista reveals that in Belgium 68 percent of the people believe that religion does more harm than good: Germany, Spain, Australia, Sweden, and Great Britain all top 60 percent. No nation disagrees with this conclusion more than Japan; only 26 percent agree that religion does more harm than good. The world average is 49 percent; the figure for the U.S. is 39 percent.

A poll by the Pew Research Center found that a record share of Americans now think it is not necessary to believe in God to be moral. Fully 56 percent agree with this conviction, while

42 percent do not.

Regarding the first survey, we know from many studies that there is a positive correlation between religion and well being. For example, the more religious a person is, the healthier and happier that person tends to be.

Comparing people of faith to secularists, we find that the former have lower rates of depression, suicide, juvenile delinquency, crime, STDs, and the like. Moreover, no segment of the population is more likely to have higher rates of these dysfunctional conditions than those born out-of-wedlock.

Belgians may think that religion does more harm than good, but their social house leaves much to be desired. Out of 42 nations studied by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCED), Belgium had the 11th highest rate of out-of-wedlock births in 2014; in 1964 it had one of the lowest rates. Japan, by contrast, ranked 41st.

What is fascinating about the Belgian-Japanese comparison is that the Japanese are not a particularly religious people: most do not identify with a religion. But unlike Belgium, there is little anti-religious fervor in Japan. The Japanese may not practice religion, but they recognize its positive personal and social attributes.

The secular animus against religion, as played out in Belgium, is made manifest in two ways: (a) more Belgians, per capita, have fled to join Islamic terrorists in the Middle East than any other European nation, and (b) it has one of the highest rates of assisted suicide in the world (those with autism and mental illness are routinely killed).

Both of these stunning developments are a direct consequence of shunning Christianity, the religion that was most prevalent in Belgium before it lost its roots. Not a pretty picture.

Regarding the second survey, it is one thing to say that a

secular person can be moral, quite another to say that society is best served by secularism. We've all met moral agnostics and immoral people of faith. That is hardly exceptional. What matters most, however, is whether society is best anchored in religious beliefs or secular ones.

In Western civilization, the Judeo-Christian ethos has been indispensable to personal and social well being. The fact that the West now has high rates of personal and social problems is not a coincidence: secularism has been on the rise.

Severing the tie between Christianity and morality is a fool's errand. It is not only impossible, attempts to do so yield ugly fruit. In the West, at least, we are best served when there is a religious-friendly environment, for when that takes hold, the chances of achieving a sound moral order are enhanced.

Polls aside, the empirical evidence shows that our Judeo-Christian heritage has done immeasurable good. George Washington said that "Religion and morality are the essential pillars of civil society." Nothing has changed since he spoke those words of wisdom.

WOODY ALLEN IS RIGHT—BEWARE A WITCH HUNT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Woody Allen's words of caution in the wake of the Harvey Weinstein scandal:

Jeffrey Katzenberg is right to observe that "There's a pack of wolves" in Hollywood. They must be gotten. But in the quest

for justice, it is important not to proceed at a gallop pace lest we victimize the innocent.

Perhaps the messenger is flawed, but his message is not: Woody Allen is right to warn that in the pursuit of sexual abusers in Hollywood, we need to guard against a witch hunt. We've seen this overreaction before, and indeed it is still playing out today in the Catholic Church.

The cover story in *Variety* is on Harvey Weinstein. Brent Lang and Elizabeth Wagmeister raise an important question. "Will the latest abuse scandal—the worst in modern-day movie business history—force studios to embrace a zero-tolerance environment...?"

Sounds reasonable, but the problem with zero tolerance policies is that they often jettison a strong commitment to the rights of the accused. Moreover, they tend to concentrate as much on minor infractions as they do serious crimes. There are signs that Hollywood is already going down this road, thus making the same mistake as the Catholic Church.

Here is what reporters for the *New York Times* said in a front-page story on Weinstein on October 17. "A spreadsheet listing men in the media business accused of sexist behaviors ranging from inappropriate flirting to rape surfaced last week and was circulated by email." There's the danger.

What is the difference between appropriate and inappropriate flirting? Does this rule apply to women, as well as men? More important, the temptation to lump flirting with rape is disturbing—it can only lead to throwing the book at minor infractions. Indeed, the article noted that "leering" was named as an offense on the spreadsheet listing.

In 2004, the bishops, responding to revelations of sexual abuse in the Boston archdiocese, went into panic mode and adopted a policy of zero tolerance. With the notable exception of Cardinal Avery Dulles, few senior members of the clergy

registered any public reservations. To be fair, the media were in overdrive, establishing an hysterical milieu. Still, Dulles should have had more support.

When the John Jay College of Criminal Justice issued its report in 2004 on the issue of priestly sexual abuse, covering the years 1950-2002, it concluded that “inappropriate touching” was the most common offense.

To be sure, this is indefensible, but the problem with “boundary violations” is that they involve, as defined by the charter adopted by the bishops, the “inability to maintain a clear and appropriate interpersonal (physical as well as emotional) distance between two individuals where such a separation is expected and necessary.” Only a lawyer, or a psychologist, is capable of writing such dribble.

What does this mean in real life? In 2012, the ombudsman for the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph explained that a “boundary violation” could mean such things as “sitting too close to a child, seeking time alone with a particular child, or giving gifts or special favors.” This is not a hypothetical case: a priest was suspended from public ministry for a similar offense by the diocese.

The goal of securing a “zero tolerance environment” often leads to another problem: the pursuit of cases from decades ago, and the push to suspend the statute of limitations.

There is a basic civil libertarian principle involved in respecting a statute of limitations: it protects the accused of wrongly being convicted of an offense where witnesses are dead or memories have faded. This is still a problem for the Catholic Church. Consider a story that just broke.

On October 17, 2017, the *New York Times* ran an article about a Long Island man, now 52, seeking compensation for being molested by a priest, now deceased. The man was 16 when he began sleeping with the priest, and continued doing so for

eight years. In other words, when this man was in his mid-twenties, we are expected to believe that he was still a “victim” of sexual abuse.

The Hollywood scandal will continue to grow, and every attempt to punish wrongdoers must be made. But those pursuing justice should not be allowed to run roughshod over the rights of the accused. As we have seen with the Catholic Church, this crusade can easily evolve into a witch hunt.

DAN BROWN'S FERTILE IMAGINATION

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Dan Brown's recent remarks about God:

The Catholic League took great exception to Dan Brown's previous books, but we are giving him a pass on his latest volume, *Origin*. That's because he has apparently learned his lesson: unlike *The Da Vinci Code*, and to a lesser extent *Angels & Demons*, his latest effort doesn't claim to be part fact, part fiction.

When *The Da Vinci Code* was released, I explained to Matt Lauer on the “Today” show why the Catholic League objected to both the book and the movie.

“Dan Brown said on this show, the ‘Today’ show, that it was based on historical fact. I have the record on this. Dan Brown opens his book with three facts, all of which are historically wrong. So he can't have it both ways. He's playing both sides of the street the way Oliver Stone did, the way Alex Haley did.”

I asked *The Da Vinci Code* director Ron Howard—in a *New York Times* op-ed page ad—to offer a disclaimer in the film stating that it was pure fiction. He refused, which only intensified our protest. *Origin*, however, makes no pretense about being a true story. Hence our disinterest in it. But we are still interested in challenging Brown on his religious ruminations.

Dan Brown told a German audience last week that God may soon be passé. “Are we naive today to believe that the gods of the present will survive and be there in a hundred years?” The need for God, he said, will no longer haunt humanity, and that is because artificial intelligence will develop a new form of “collective conscience.”

Not sure whether Brown knows it or not, but the term “collective conscience” was introduced in the late nineteenth century by the great French sociologist, Emile Durkheim. He coined it to show that, unlike the individual conscience, there was a more widely held set of ideas, beliefs, and moral sentiments that formed the collective conscience of the people.

Religion, Durkheim said, played a big role in constituting the collective conscience. But he never met Dan Brown. Brown apparently thinks that we are on the verge of a new Dr. Victor Frankenstein, a mad scientist who can create new forms of life, or in this case, a new collective conscience.

The problem for Brown is daunting: the collective conscience has to have a content, and if it is not based on religious beliefs, what exactly will it be based on? Science? Impossible. The function of the collective conscience is to bind people together, and that is something outside the domain of science.

Brown also thinks that “some form of global consciousness” will emerge, one that will “become our divine.” (Looks like even Brown can’t rid humanity of divinity.) But the idea of a

“global consciousness” is a fiction—it does not exist, and never will.

Ironically, Brown made this inane comment in the same speech where he addressed the movement on the part of Catalonia to become independent of Spain. “I love Catalonia. I love Spain. I hope they work it out. It’s a heartbreaking situation, but it’s a sign of the times.”

Yes, it’s just like Brexit. If anything, there is a strong movement worldwide away from the kind of unity that a “global consciousness” is predicated on. So why is he coming to a conclusion that is undercut by his own observation? His fertile imagination is one of the great wonders of the world.

Finally, Brown tells us that “Our need for that exterior god, that sits up there and judges us...will diminish and eventually disappear.”

Judgment. That’s what is really eating Brown. He and his ilk are scared to death of being judged by the Almighty. But even Frankenstein made judgments, and none was more important than his decision to devour his creator, Dr. Victor Frankenstein.

GOV. BROWN VETO WELCOMED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on California Governor Jerry Brown’s veto of a bill targeting religious employers:

On Sunday, Gov. Brown vetoed AB 569, a bill that the Catholic League opposed as “a blatant assault on religious freedom.”

As I wrote to every member of the California State Senate in August, “Under the guise of ‘anti-discrimination,’” this bill

“would bar religious organizations from establishing faith-based codes of conduct for their employees. So, for example, a Catholic school could not require that its teachers adhere to public and workplace rules of conduct that would model the principles of the Catholic faith to Catholic schoolchildren.”

The bill specifically targeted codes of conduct involving employees’ “reproductive health care decisions.” That, I pointed out, along with “its full-throated endorsement by groups such as NARAL Pro-Choice California, make clear the bill’s true intent: to undermine Catholic teaching on the sanctity of human life, by forcing the Church to employ people who publicly reject that teaching. It is a thinly disguised attempt to impose radical pro-abortion policies on religious organizations.”

Gov. Brown’s veto is a welcome victory for religious liberty.

MEDIA EXPLODE OVER CATHOLIC DRESS CODE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the media reaction to an Indiana Catholic school’s dress code:

Catholic schools have a dress code. Yeshivas have a dress code. Many Muslim schools have a dress code. Why is it that Jewish and Muslim dress codes never seem to infuriate the media, but Catholic ones drive them crazy? Like the little boy with his nose pressed up against the storefront window, media voyeurs cannot take their eyes off of Catholic traditions.

The dress code for First Communion, as virtually everyone knows, requires a white dress or skirt for girls. But the

parents of a student at St. John the Evangelist in St. John, Indiana decided to violate it: they announced that their daughter would be wearing a pant suit. Obviously, they were denied. (The girl was not denied her First Communion, just her participation in the sacrament with her classmates.)

The only real story here is the media's reaction to it; it is otherwise a non-event. Yet they are hyperventilating everywhere, including overseas.

The "story" has been picked by scores of media outlets, ranging from the *Washington Post* to the ABC affiliates in Philadelphia, Houston, Chicago, New York, Raleigh-Durham, and Los Angeles. It has also been picked up by media outlets in Canada, the United Kingdom, Morocco, Australia, Istanbul, and Poland. To our knowledge, it has yet to run in any nation in the South China Seas, but this could change.

We know the media are obsessed with Catholic schools, but in the event they want to divert their eyes elsewhere, we recommend the following.

In Hempstead, New York, there is a school, the Crescent School, that provides for "Top Education in an Islamic Environment." Girls in grades 6-12 must wear a navy blue jilbab (a full sleeved gown), navy blue/black pants, plain white hijab, white socks and black shoes (no heels, open toes, flip flops or fancy party shoes are allowed).

At the Hebrew Academy in New York City, girls cannot wear blouses or shirts that are sleeveless or have short sleeves. Skirts may not have slits in them. Make-up is prohibited.

So what if the parents at the Hebrew Academy object? The penalties are specific. "Do not send your child to school if he/she is not dressed to code. Students will not be allowed in class unless properly attired...Should a student arrive improperly dressed, he/she will be sent to the office to wait until his/her parents come to school with a change of

clothing.”

By the way, many public schools also have dress codes. Just this week, a third-grade boy in a Jacksonville, Florida school was sent home because he dyed his hair blue for the school picture. That’s because the boy violated the school’s policy. “Hair shall be clean and well combed or brushed. Extreme hairstyles will not be acceptable.”

Catholic schools did not invent dress codes, but for some reason the media act as if they did. We know what’s driving this mania, and that is why we at the Catholic League have a job. The bigots keep us quite busy. Indeed, by any reasonable measure, we’re considered a growth industry.

NEW YORK TIMES OBJECTS TO ART CENSORSHIP

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an editorial in today’s *New York Times*:

A week ago today, we published a critical statement on the failure of the *New York Times* to issue an editorial condemning the decision by the Guggenheim Museum to censor three artworks from an exhibition that opened on October 6. The museum caved in to a protest by animal rights activists over two videos, and one rather bizarre installment, that they found objectionable; the latter featured hundreds of lizards, crickets, and other reptiles and insects running around eating each other under a warming lamp.

In our news release, we hammered the *New York Times* for habitually criticizing the Catholic League for protesting

artwork that is palpably anti-Catholic, yet standing silent in the face of a protest by animal rights activists. We even waited to make a statement until October 6, thinking that maybe the paper would issue an editorial the day the exhibition opened. Well, guess what? Today it delivered.

Today there is an editorial in the *New York Times* titled, "The Guggenheim Censors Itself." It is well reasoned, even if it is a week late.

We were the only organization to register an objection to the *Times'* silence, and we did so by listing the email address of the paper's editorial page editor.

At the bottom of some of our new releases, we provide the email contact address of the offending party. It is important that you follow through and express your concerns. We can provide leadership but we cannot succeed without you. Thanks to everyone who took the time to let the Times know your thoughts. It worked.

ATHEISTS LOSE ON HOUSE CHAPLAIN LAWSUIT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a federal court ruling upholding prayer invocations in Congress:

The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), a militant atheist organization, lost in its bid to offer a non-prayer invocation on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The House begins each legislative day with a prayer—"a practice," U.S. District Judge Rosemary Collyer noted, "that

originated during the first Continental Congress and continues today.”

FFRF president Dan Barker sought to instead deliver a secular invocation, and sued the House chaplain, Jesuit Father Patrick Conroy, for not inviting him to do so.

Judge Collyer, however, upheld Father Conroy. “The legislative prayer practice of the House of Representatives is consistent with the decisions of the Supreme Court and this Circuit, as well as the Rules of the House,” she wrote on October 11. “A ‘prayer’ is required under the House rules and is consistent with the Establishment Clause.”

The judge is also correct in affirming the long tradition of this practice. Indeed, the first U.S. House chaplain was appointed by none other than George Washington.

But tradition—especially tradition based on America’s Judeo-Christian heritage—is something the atheists at FFRF cannot abide. It is great news that their attack on this tradition has been rebuffed in federal court.

Having played a key role in 2000 in securing the appointment of the House’s first Catholic chaplain, Father Daniel Coughlin, the Catholic League is particularly pleased to commend his successor, Father Conroy, for standing firm and winning this victory over militant atheism.

DRAIN HOLLYWOOD’S CESSPOOL

Catholic League president Bill Donohue addresses the larger issues attendant to Harvey Weinstein’s fall from stardom:

Revelations about Harvey Weinstein’s predatory behavior should

inspire others in Hollywood to come forward. We have known for decades that Hollywood is infested with sexually abusing men in senior positions, but there has been a reluctance to come forward. Weinstein has provided an opening that must be seized.

Hollywood has had a jolly good time ridiculing the Catholic Church for its sexual abuse scandal. Now the tables have turned. The task of draining Hollywood's cesspool should begin by addressing the sexual abuse of minors. Those who work in the entertainment industry have a moral responsibility to go public with their stories.

The situation in Hollywood is so bad that an organization has been established to tackle this issue. BizParentz Foundation is a non-profit entity dedicated to working with parents and children engaged in the entertainment industry. It has conducted workshops such as "Predators and Pedophiles" that expose the nature of the problem.

Anne Henry is a co-founder of BizParentz Foundation. She said a year ago that "Hollywood is currently shielding about 100 active abusers." She estimates that about 75 percent of child actors "went off the rails" later in life. "The problem has been endemic in Hollywood for a long time and it's finally coming to light."

Alison Arngrim, who played Nellie Oleson on *Little House On the Prairie*, said she "literally heard that they [children] were 'passed around.' The word was that they were given drugs and being used for sex. It was awful—these were kids, they weren't 18 yet."

Lord of the Rings star Elijah Wood said of Hollywood that there are "a lot of vipers in this industry. There is darkness in the underbelly." He added that it is "all organized." Which means that many must know what has been going on.

Corey Haim suffered more than most Hollywood victims. He was

raped on a movie set when he was just 11; he died of drug addiction at the age of 38.

Corey Feldman said that when he was 14 he was “surrounded” by child molesters who acted like “vultures.” He does not mince words. “I can tell you that the No. 1 problem in Hollywood was, and is, and always will be, pedophilia.”

Feldman says Hollywood is famous for throwing parties for kids. But they are not your typical children’s party: they are “grooming” events, opportunities to lure kids into the world of sexual conquest. “The range [of ages] was usually 10 to 16.”

Feldman says he would “love to name names,” but is afraid of being sued. That is understandable, but there is too much at stake to keep silent any more. He needs to buck up. Feldman can begin by naming the “Hollywood mogul” whom he says is responsible for the death of his friend, Corey Haim.

Who is this monster responsible for Haim’s death? If Feldman knows who he is, others surely know as well. They need to come forward without delay.

The time has come to drain Hollywood’s cesspool.

WEINSTEIN’S DUPLICITY IS ASTONISHING

Bill Donohue and Harvey Weinstein have been locking horns for over two decades. The following is a summary of Weinstein’s Catholic-bashing films (it is taken from a previous news release). It is worth reading it again in light of recent news

stories about his philandering.

We now know that Weinstein abused women even as he championed the cause of women's rights. This appears to be consistent with his duplicitous personality: He condemned some expressions of bigotry (anti-Semitism) while contributing to other expressions (anti-Catholicism).

Donohue's remarks were made on March 26, 2015. He was commenting on Weinstein's statement condemning anti-Semitism at a Simon Wiesenthal Center awards dinner two days earlier:

"We're gonna have to get as organized as the Mafia," Weinstein said. "We just can't take it anymore. We just can't take these things. There's gotta be a way to fight back." He was given the Humanitarian Award by Christoph Waltz, who praised him for making movies that made Jews proud of their heritage.

I join Weinstein in condemning anti-Semitism. But before I am prepared to issue a joint statement with him, he needs to first condemn anti-Catholicism and pledge not to contribute to it again.

In 1995, Weinstein and his brother, Bob, offered us "Priest," a film featuring nothing but miscreant priests. In 1999, we were treated to "Dogma," where the audience learned of a descendant of Mary and Joseph who works in an abortion clinic.

In 2002, they released "40 Days and 40 Nights," a film that ridiculed a Catholic for giving up sex for Lent. Also opening in 2002 was "The Magdalene Sisters," a movie that smeared nuns. In 2003, "Bad Santa" opened for the holidays; Santa was cast as a chain-smoking, drunken, foul-mouthed, suicidal, sexual predator. In 2006, "Black Christmas" made a predictably dark statement about the holiday.

In 2013, they released "Philomena," a tale of malicious lies about Irish nuns and the Church (Harvey lobbied hard for an Oscar, but came up empty). In real life, Philomena Lee was a

teenager who abandoned her out-of-wedlock son, and who, because of the good efforts of the nuns, was adopted by an American couple.

Anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism should both be condemned, without equivocation. Condemning one but not the other is irresponsible, though it is fashionable to do so.