

AMERICAN ATHEISTS FIRES ITS PRESIDENT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the firing of the leader of American Atheists:

The board of directors of American Atheists has fired its president, David Silverman. The decision was made the night of April 12. With the exception of one Internet site, there have been zero news stories on this development.

The statement of April 13 that is posted on the website of American Atheists simply says that on April 10 Silverman was placed on leave, pending a review of his conduct. The review ended with his firing. "The Board of Directors has reviewed internal documents and communications related to the initial complaint as well as evidence relating to the additional allegations brought to the Board's attention."

The board's April 13 statement gave no details about Silverman's conduct. But the website Buzzfeed did. The board statement cited the Buzzfeed story, suggesting that it does not find it to be inaccurate. The following is taken from the Buzzfeed account.

Silverman was removed because of "explosive written allegations of sexual assault and undisclosed conflicts of interest." Silverman's lawyer says his client denies any wrongdoing and "has never had a non-consensual sexual encounter." He added that at the time of the alleged incidents, Silverman and his wife were in an "open marriage."

Silverman is being investigated by the board for allegedly not disclosing "financial and personal conflicts of interest relating to the promotion of his book, *Fighting God: An Atheist Manifesto for a Religious World*, and the appointment to a senior position of a woman with whom Silverman was

allegedly having a sexual relationship. (That appointment has been rescinded.)”

The sexual assault charges are more specific. One woman said that at an American Atheists convention in 2015, Silverman forced himself on her after everyone else had left the room. “He physically pressed me to the wall and began to kiss me forcefully, grabbed my breasts, and put his hand into my leggings where there was actual penetration of my vagina,” she wrote.

Silverman continued the assault at the Memphis hotel, she says, by calling her a “dirty little whore.” He pushed her to her knees, “where his penis briefly made contact with my mouth,” she said. She stood up and told him “no.” He responded by slapping her, saying, “You don’t get to say no to me.” Her account was verified by two prominent atheists who just days later said the woman told them what happened.

In 2012, an undergraduate student who was attending the annual Secular Student Alliance convention in Columbus, Ohio, said she got drunk with Silverman, and in his room he “pressured her into having anal sex.” She told a female friend about the incident, and the two of them wrote to American Atheists about what happened.

There is obviously something wrong, seriously wrong, about not only Silverman, but about the organization. The founder, Madalyn Murray O’Hair, whose lawsuit banning school prayer proved successful, was a scatological queen, a sexual deviant, and a thief.

“I will defecate and urinate when I damn well please and as the spirit—and the physical necessity—moves me.” She also said, “I will engage in sexual activity with a consenting male any time and any place I damn well please.” The refrain, “Not in My Backyard” never sounded more persuasive.

O’Hair also ripped off her own members by absconding with more

than \$600,000. Six years after she disappeared, the FBI revealed in 2001 that it had found the bones of her mutilated body. She was murdered by David Waters, a convicted felon out on parole. He was once an office manager at American Atheists; he also ripped off the organization by stealing \$54,000.

There are two outstanding issues that deserve a public airing.

Why is the board of directors of American Atheists refusing to offer any details about Silverman? Whatever happened to transparency? American Atheists has been quick to pounce on the Catholic Church for holding back information about wayward priests. Why the double standard?

Secondly, why the media blackout? Why has not one newspaper, wire service, or broadcast news outlet covered Silverman's firing? Why are they not questioning the absence of transparency? Will criminal charges be brought against Silverman?

I debated Silverman several times and always found him to be intellectually shallow and mean-spirited. But I had no idea that he was this bad.

GAY MARRIAGE DEFENDERS GETTING CRAZY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the intolerance that marks many gay marriage proponents:

Until yesterday morning, historically speaking, virtually every person in the world believed that marriage was a union between people of the opposite sex. This was true of both

Western civilization and Eastern civilization.

Moreover, beginning with Judaism, most world religions considered homosexuality taboo. Plato thought homosexuality was against nature, the Romans made it a capital crime, and Jefferson made it a felony. Now no one can get tenure at many—perhaps most—colleges and universities if he believes what virtually every person in the world used to believe, until yesterday morning, historically speaking.

Punishing public officials, and denying others jobs, for simply holding to the traditional understanding of marriage, is now routine. Consider two recent examples.

Mike Pompeo, the CIA director, was grilled by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 12 regarding his nomination by President Trump to be Secretary of State. The State Department, as everyone concedes, has as much to do with two men marrying as a local parks department does. But to the gay obsessed, it doesn't matter: everyone must line up single file to pledge his allegiance to the gay agenda.

New Jersey Senator Cory Booker was clearly upset that Pompeo doesn't share his trendy view of gay marriage. Tellingly, he never asked Pompeo about Christian persecution in the Middle East. In fact there is no record of Booker ever asking anyone about Christian persecution. Yet he sits on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, not the Department of the Interior.

Badgering Pompeo for his conviction that marriage should be between a man and a woman is unseemly. It's not only Booker who is going bonkers over this, the Anti-Defamation League, which was founded to fight anti-Semitism, wrote a letter to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chastising Pompeo. And the gay-crazed *New York Times* said Pompeo's rather normal view of marriage "raised alarm bells."

It's not just on the national level that this issue has exploded in a wave of intolerance.

On April 11, Katherine Asjes was rejected by the Iowa Board of Medicine because she holds to the same view of marriage that virtually everyone in the world used to believe, until yesterday morning, historically speaking. The Catholic mother of six, and the wife of a military veteran, was nominated by Gov. Kim Reynolds. It seems clear that she would have been confirmed had she not been stopped by intolerant gay activists.

Neither Pompeo nor Asjes is a threat to any lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer person. But many activists in that community are a threat to those of us who still believe what virtually everyone in the world used to believe, until yesterday morning, historically speaking.

MEDIA DISMISS FACEBOOK'S ANTI-CATHOLIC BIAS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on media coverage of Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg's remarks:

In his testimony before Congressional committees, Mark Zuckerberg had to apologize for Facebook's pattern of blocking Catholic pages from being posted. As I pointed out [yesterday](#), no one asked him about blocking anti-Semitic or anti-Muslim pages. Why? Because that just doesn't happen at Facebook (save for clear instances of hate speech). If it did, the media would be all over it.

There was one newspaper in the United States that wrote about Facebook's Catholic problem: the *Washington Times*. And there was one editorial mentioning it: *Investor's Business Daily*. That was it.

Rep. G.K. Butterfield prodded Zuckerberg on racial diversity, saying Facebook should be doing a better job in hiring. Zuckerberg said this was “an important issue,” and he pledged to work with him on it.

Neither Butterfield nor anyone else claimed that Facebook discriminates against blacks, or blocks African American pages from being posted. Perhaps racial diversity can be improved, but that is a far cry from the problem of bigotry and censorship. Yet the issue of racial diversity merited coverage in the *New York Times*, the *New York Observer*, NPR, and Time. None of these four elite media outlets mentioned Facebook’s history of blocking Catholic pages.

When it comes to the media, not all expressions of bigotry are equal.

DOES FACEBOOK HATE CATHOLICS?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the testimony of Facebook chairman and CEO Mark Zuckerberg before the Senate Commerce and Judiciary Committee on April 10 and the House Energy and Commerce Committee on April 11:

Sen. Ted Cruz informed Facebook chairman and CEO Mark Zuckerberg that his company “has blocked over two dozen Catholic pages,” noting they were prevented from posting on Facebook because “their content and brand were, quote, ‘unsafe to the community.’” None of the pages came even close to constituting hate speech.

Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers grilled Zuckerberg about an ad that was initially blocked by Facebook because it featured Jesus on the Cross. The ad was submitted by Franciscan

University of Steubenville as a theology degree advertisement. Facebook deemed it to be “excessively violent” and “sensational.” Crucifixions usually are.

The company later apologized. The congresswoman from Washington wasn't convinced. “Could you tell [us] what was so shocking, sensational or excessively violent about the ad to cause it to be initially censored?” “It sounds like we made a mistake there,” Zuckerberg replied.

Not mentioned in the hearings was an incident that took place between last Thanksgiving and Christmas. A Catholic vocational organization, Mater Ecclesiae Fund for Vocations, had its ads unduly held up for a bogus reason. Facebook told the organization that its content potentially violated Facebook's policy on discrimination for housing ads. But the ad had absolutely nothing to do with housing. By the time the ad was permitted, it was too late to matter, the effect of which was to kill the fundraising effort.

A thorough search of the two-day testimony reveals that there were no examples of Jewish or Muslim groups having their ads blocked. Moreover, no examples of anti-Semitism were mentioned. There were two references to anti-Muslim posts.

An Internet search of Facebook complaints made by Jews and Muslims turned up a few instances of alleged bias against both groups. But instances where Jewish and Muslim pages were blocked, save for clear examples of hate speech, are virtually non-existent.

What gives? Why the singling out of Catholics for censorship?

When Sen. Cruz pressed Zuckerberg about blocking some two dozen Catholic pages, the Facebook co-founder replied that he tries to make sure “we do not have any bias,” but conceded that his company is “located in Silicon Valley, which is an extremely left-leaning place.”

In other words, Zuckerberg's attempt to screen out anti-Catholicism is being thwarted by his own employees because they harbor extremist left-wing views. This is quite a concession. It raises two questions: Why has he failed to check the bigotry, and why do left-wingers hate Catholicism?

One reason why Zuckerberg has failed in squashing anti-Catholic bigotry is the difficulty of policing his staff. He admits that he has upwards of 20,000 people working on content review. Cruz asked, "Do you know the political orientation of those 15,000 to 20,000 people engaging in content review?" "No senator," he replied.

Actually, he does: Zuckerberg admitted that his company is located in an "extremely left-leaning" community, and no one suspects he is importing his staff from Kansas.

Furthermore, Rep. Steve Scalise, Rep. Jeff Duncan, and Rep. McMorris Rodgers all noted the anti-conservative bias at Facebook. The latter cited what FCC Chairman Ajit Pai said last November: he maintained that "edge providers routinely block or discriminate against content they don't like." No doubt the censors consider themselves to be beacons of tolerance.

Now it is understandable why left-wingers might harbor an animus against conservatives—they are at opposite ends of the political spectrum. But why do they hate Catholics?

In fact, Facebook does not hate Catholics—it's just orthodox Catholics it loathes. To wit: there is no evidence that any of the Catholic pages blocked by Facebook are associated with dissident or liberal Catholic causes.

None of this is surprising. It all boils down to sex. The "extremely left-leaning" Facebook employees, just like "extremely left-leaning" persons everywhere, are in a rage over the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality. It is not Church teachings on the Trinity that exercises them—it's the

conviction that marriage is properly understood as a union between a man and a woman.

Zuckerberg told Rep. McMorris Rodgers, “I wouldn’t extrapolate from a few examples to assuming that the overall system is biased.” But we are not talking about a few anecdotes or hard choices: a pattern of bigotry is evident, and the pages being censored are not Catholic assaults on others.

Rep. Kevin John Cramer from North Dakota suggested to Zuckerberg that he should look to hire more people from places like Bismarck where people tend to have “common sense.”

It’s more common decency and fairness that is the problem. The fact is that those who are the captains of censorship in America work in places like the tech companies, higher education, the media, publishing, the arts, and Hollywood. What do they have in common? They are all examples of “extremely left-leaning” places that hate Catholic sexual ethics.

Zuckerberg has his work cut out for him. He can begin by hiring practicing orthodox Catholics in senior positions monitoring content review. He should also be ready to pay for relocation fees.

THE POLITICS OF CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the way the media cover child sexual abuse:

Media coverage of the sexual abuse of minors has long been

biased against the Catholic Church.

As virtually everyone knows by now, there is not a single institution in the nation where adults and minors interact on a regular basis that has not been rocked by sexual misconduct. Indeed, there is no institution in the nation where adults mingle with other adults that has not been touched by sexual improprieties. Why, then, the constant bias, especially regarding adults and minors, in reporting on this subject?

Take, for example, the Child Victims Act in New York State. This year, as in the past, there was an attempt to revise the law regarding the age at which alleged victims could bring suit. Few disagree with this objective. More controversial is the one-year window, the so-called “look back” provision: it would allow victims one year to file suit for alleged offenses that occurred at any time in the past.

From reading the newspapers, listening to radio news, and watching TV reporting, the average person would conclude that only the Catholic Church opposes the Child Victims Act. This is a lie. Many organizations have worked against this bill. They have done so precisely because of the inherent injustice attendant to the “look back” provision. Before naming these groups, consider why they object.

How can claims be fairly adjudicated in cases where the alleged offender, and the alleged victim, offer contrasting accounts about something that may or may not have happened decades ago? Indeed, the accused may be dead. Moreover, sexual offenses rarely take place in public, making moot the role of witnesses.

Statutes of limitation exist for a basic civil libertarian reason: They were crafted to protect the due process rights of the accused. They were not dreamed up by uncaring and unscrupulous parties looking to dodge the reach of the law.

So who else has been on record opposing the Child Victims Act?

Orthodox Jews, the Boy Scouts, foster care agencies, insurance companies, and—most importantly—teachers unions.

Nowhere in America is child sexual abuse tolerated with greater impunity than in the local public school. When molesters are charged, they are often given a desk job, doing the kind of make-shift work that is itself a public rip-off; as we have seen in New York City, this can go on for years. Why? Because of pressure from the teachers unions.

Some journalists note that when proposed changes in the statute of limitations are made, the public schools, unlike the Catholic Church, remain on the sidelines. This is true. The reporters should say why. It is because the public schools are protected by state sovereign immunity statutes, legal measures that allow a short period of time, usually 90 days, in which to file suit. In other words, the proposed changes rarely apply to the public schools.

What about those instances when proposed changes explicitly apply to the public schools? That's when the public school lobbyists kick into high gear, making the exact same arguments against the "look back" provision that the Catholic Church makes. So why don't we hear about this? Because of media bias.

In 2017, the United Federation of Teachers and the New York State United Teachers spent over \$1 million lobbying against the Child Victims Act. With the exception of WNBC-TV news, and a columnist from the *Albany Times Union*, Chris Churchill, no one in the media has mentioned this.

The *New York Times*, the *Daily News*, and the *Times Union*, as well as virtually all newspapers in the Empire State, have editorialized in favor of the Child Victims Act, and almost invariably they criticize the Catholic Church for opposing it. Orthodox Jews and the Boy Scouts are occasionally mentioned, but social service agencies and insurance companies never are. Most indefensible, the teachers unions are always given a

pass.

This amounts to a cover-up by omission. The media have underplayed the principled reasons for opposing the “look-back” provision and overplayed the role of the Catholic Church in fighting it. It’s time the truth were told and politics were put aside.

THE IGNORANCE OF SETH MEYERS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on last night’s episode of “Late Night with Seth Meyers”:

Seth Meyers and one of his genius writers, Jenny Hagel, did a number on the Catholic Church last night that showcased their ignorance. Here is the exchange:

Meyers: “The Vatican recently refused to host an international women’s day conference because one of the speakers was a lesbian.”

Hagel: “...and because they’re too busy hosting a 2,000-year-long pedophile convention.”

Here’s the truth. For the past four years, the Vatican has hosted an event, Voices of Faith, that gives prominent Catholic women a platform to discuss a range of social and cultural issues; it is part of the International Women’s Day. It has never screened for sexual orientation.

This year the Vatican refused to host the event because two women, Ssenfuka Joanita Warry and Tina Beattie, have a reputation of bashing the Catholic Church. Had they been heterosexual, the result would have been the same.

Why is this different from any other conference host? Do journalists host conferences and awards dinners featuring those who hate the media? Do Muslims welcome anti-Islamic bigots to their events?

The quip about pedophiles is another example of their ignorance. If Meyers and Hagel were interested in the truth, they would mention homosexuals—gays were responsible for the lion's share of the scandal (less than five percent were pedophiles). But that would take guts. And this is not something that the writers and hosts of late-night TV shows have in abundance.

Talking about truth and courage, why didn't Meyers and Hagel use a more contemporary example? Why didn't they make a joke about Hollywood not hosting a conference featuring its most strident critics? Then they could have said that the moguls are too busy hosting a decades-long rapist convention.

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THE FLAWS IN CNN'S EPISODE ON PIUS XII

University of Mississippi professor Ronald Rychlak, one of the world's foremost scholars of the Catholic Church's role during the Holocaust, was included in last night's episode of the CNN series on the papacy. He serves on the board of advisors of the Catholic League. He prepared the following assessment of the April 8th edition for the Catholic League. Here are his remarks:

For the past month, CNN has been running weekly episodes of a series called *Pope: The Most Powerful Man in History*. Each episode focuses on an era and lays out issues that faced the papacy at that time. On April 8, the episode was on the World War II-era popes, Pius XI (1922-1939) and Pius XII (1939 to 1958). The episode focused on the Vatican's response to the Holocaust. I participated as a commentator.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to properly lay out and evaluate all the facts and circumstances of this era in an hour-long program (minus time allotted for commercials). My book *Hitler, the War, and the Pope* is over 600 pages long, and I wrote two other books on the topic just to analyze some of the issues raised by these facts. The episode did not come close.

CNN avoided the pop journalists who too often populate such debates, but even among serious scholars, there is debate and confusion. Given the time constraints, it was necessary for the producers to make cuts and avoid many details. Of course, when that happens, the tendency is to raise the controversial point, ignore the details and the nuance, and leave the viewer to assume the worst. That happened quite a bit in this episode.

One such instance related to the 1929 agreement between Italy and the Holy See, the Lateran Treaty. This agreement reconciled a difficulty that had existed since the fall of the Papal States in 1870. In it, the Vatican recognized the kingdom of Italy, received compensation for property that had been seized, and defined the rights and obligations of the Church and State. According to CNN, it also set a precedent that the Vatican would be willing to negotiate with dictators for sovereignty. That is simply not correct.

Fascists from around the world viewed this treaty as a betrayal by Mussolini and thought he sold out to the Church. Perhaps regretting that he had gone so far, in the month

following its signing Mussolini stated: "Within the State, the Church is not sovereign, nor is it even free... because it is subordinate... to the general law of the State. We have not resurrected the Temporal Power of the Popes, we have buried it." For his part, Pius XI noted that Catholicism was in significant ways inconsistent with Fascism. He explained the agreement by saying: "Where there is a question of saving souls, We feel the courage to treat with the Devil in person." A few years later he issued the encyclical, *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* (We Have No Need) in Italian to make it accessible to the Italian people. He released it, however, in Paris rather than the Vatican because otherwise Mussolini might have prevented its distribution.

In reaching accord with Italy, Pius XI treated it the same way he treated other nations. Even if a state might stand to gain in the short term, governments do not last, and eventually the Church would be better positioned if it had a relationship with the people. Moreover, the Lateran Treaty provided that the Church reserved "the right to exercise her moral and spiritual power in every case." So, while the Holy See was officially neutral, it did not relinquish the right to speak on moral truths. None of this was seen on CNN.

Similarly, the 1933 concordat with Germany was portrayed as a capitulation to Hitler. In reality, it was a defense mechanism that permitted the Church to save souls. Naturally, the Church insisted on a provision permitting it to speak to moral issues. Hitler, who first thought he could exploit the concordat, soon saw it as being used by the Church to protect Jews (with real or forged baptism certificates), and he vowed to end it immediately after the war. That was not mentioned on CNN.

The show did a nice job of explaining the importance of Pius XI's anti-Nazi encyclical, *Mit brennender Sorge*, but it ended by saying that this was the only time he spoke to all of Germany about the Nazis and the horror faced by Jews. Not only

does that overlook numerous statements by the Vatican's radio and newspaper, it also fails to explain that the encyclical was immediately suppressed, doing no actual good for the victims; only leading to more persecution. In fact, two other messages – one from Poland and one from Holland – urged the pope not to speak, lest he cause more suffering. Neither was mentioned on the show.

CNN gave Pius XII credit for his significant role in drafting *Mit brennender Sorge*. Unfortunately, it suggested that the wording was diplomatic and not sufficiently forceful. No mention was made of the numerous drafts that were recently discovered. Some were more forceful while others were less so. Obviously, the pope and his assistants were struggling to hit the right tone. One might quibble, but they got it about right.

CNN mentioned an encyclical that Pius XI was working on at the time of his death. Fortunately, it did not call this a "hidden encyclical," as is often done. There was, however, no mention of Pius XII's first encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*, which drew the same research while eliminating anti-Semitic passages from the earlier draft. *Summi Pontificatus* is essential to understanding Pius XII's approach to a wartime papacy. I devoted a chapter to it in my book, but CNN did not even mention it.

CNN told of Pius XII's 1942 Christmas message, but omitted the most important passage in which he said mankind owed a solemn vow "never to rest until valiant souls of every people and every nation" arise and "devote themselves to the services of the human person and of a divinely ennobled human society." Mankind owed this vow to "the hundreds of thousands who, through no fault of their own, and solely because of their nation or race, have been condemned to death or progressive extinction."

Listeners on both sides of the war understood that this was a

direct reference to the Jews. A Christmas Day editorial in the *New York Times* praised Pius XII for his moral leadership in opposing the Nazis: "No Christmas sermon reaches a larger congregation than the message Pope Pius XII addresses to a war-torn world at this season. This Christmas more than ever he is a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent." The Nazis also understood. According to a report by Heinrich Himmler's Superior Security Office:

"In a manner never known before, the Pope has repudiated the National Socialist New European Order... It is true, the Pope does not refer to the National Socialists in Germany by name, but his speech is one long attack on everything we stand for... God, he says, regards all people and races as worthy of the same consideration. Here he is clearly speaking on behalf of the Jews... [H]e is virtually accusing the German people of injustice toward the Jews, and makes himself the mouthpiece of the Jewish war criminals."

CNN included Mark Riebling and his important work showing Pius XII's involvement with the plot to assassinate Hitler. Unfortunately, the show suggested that this was an unsettled proposition because there was no written evidence. As Mark explained, there are tape recordings proving his involvement!

Similarly, after explaining that the pope knew that written evidence could get people in trouble with the Nazis, a commentator questioned the papal role in sheltering Roman Jews because there are no surviving written papal orders. Some mention should have been made of the numerous eyewitnesses who testified to receiving or overhearing orders from the Vatican.

Near the end of the program, one commentator, Suzanne Brown-Fleming, receives much attention as she assesses whether Pius XII deserves to be called a saint. As an initial matter, that seems a particularly internal matter for the Church, not for commentators. She, however, professes to speak not only as a historian but also as a Catholic, so perhaps she has standing.

Her analysis, however, is weak.

First of all, without any context (which may be due to editing by the producer), she quoted from a 1919 letter written by the future Pope Pius XII. It used some offensive-sounding language while referring to certain "Jews." Left unexplained was that this was a grossly distorted translation, with pejorative words that are not faithful to the original Italian. When this letter was first published in its original Italian, no one suggested that it was anti-Semitic. The tone of anti-Semitism was introduced only by a calculated mis-translation by a noted papal critic. I included an accurate translation in the second edition of *Hitler, the War, and the Pope* (2010).

Moreover, any disrespect reflected in the language did not stem from racial or even religious differences, but from the Bolshevik activity in Munich. There was animosity between the Church and the revolutionaries, and they were the focus of the comment, not all Jewish people. This letter described the leaders of a rogue government that had persecuted the people of Bavaria. It was written 14 years before Hitler came to power and the Jewish persecution began. Its misuse in the television program was offensive.

Brown-Fleming also suggested that Pius XII's diplomatic response to the Holocaust may have been influenced by anti-Semitism. Earlier in the program, however, I had noted that 2,500 Catholic priests were interned at Dachau. The diplomatic approach that Pius used toward these leaders of his own church was the same that he used for Jewish victims. Priest or peasant, the pope did not vary his approach to the problem. One might legitimately question whether he made the right call, but one cannot honestly question his intent.

Brown-Fleming says that one must wait until the remaining archives are opened before a decision can be made on Pius XII's sainthood cause. She is wrong. It is probably time to open the archives, and whether prudential judgments were

correct can be debated, but that is not the issue. One can make a reasoned decision about Pius XII's intent and motivation on the basis of the evidence that is already available. In fact, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints has done that. It has concluded that Pius XII led a life of heroic virtue. The bishops and theologians have also approved him for canonization. The work continues only to verify a miracle.

CNN should have noted that Jewish groups from around the world praised Pius at the end of the war and at his death. Also unmentioned was that Pope Francis – an apparent favorite of the producers – has often praised Pius XII. Just last June he asked: “How many, beginning with Pius XII, took risks to hide Jews so that they wouldn't be killed, so that they wouldn't be deported? They risked their skin!”

While there is much to learn about the popes of World War II, viewers should not think that they have learned the full story just by watching this series, much less a single episode. Even well-intended producers and commentators are limited by the constraints of the clock.

CATHOLIC CHURCH ATTENDANCE DROPS

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

We knew that younger Catholics were going to church in fewer numbers than in the past, but what is new about this Gallup poll is the decline among older Catholics. Overall, only 39 percent of Catholics say they attend church weekly, and among

those aged 60 and over the figure is 49 percent. This means that “for the first time, a majority of Catholics in no generational group attend weekly.”

In 1955, 73 percent of those aged 21-29 attended church weekly, but now the figure is 25 percent. Among those 60 and over, 73 percent attended church weekly in 1955, but now the figure is 49 percent.

The number of young people professing no religion, nationwide, was only 1 percent in 1955. Today it is 33 percent. That is an increase of 3200 percent!

The Gallup poll reports the data, but offers no explanation.

There are many reasons for the decline in church attendance. Here are seven core reasons.

1) The declining role of religion in elementary and secondary education has been dramatic.

2) Higher education has become increasingly hostile to religion, especially Christianity.

3) The pop culture, as manifested on TV, the movies, and music, is marked by a libertinism that is at odds with Christianity.

4) The ascendancy of moral relativism—the denial of moral absolutes—has engulfed society. The nation’s cultural elites are responsible for this outcome, including, sadly, some religious leaders.

5) Declining marriage rates, and birthrates among married couples, has made it easier for parents to neglect their religious duties, including obligations to their own children.

6) Those over the age of 60 are the baby boomers, a generation that in their youth experienced the decadence of the 1960s and 1970s. Many of them entered their senior years without a

strong religious background.

7) The Catholic clergy, which in the 1950s expected the faithful to attend church—and they did—lowered their expectations in subsequent decades, yielding predictable results.

There is no iron law of history, except on the blackboard of ignorant professors, so a reversal of events is possible. But a culture doesn't change by happenstance: it takes a determined effort on the part of the nation's elites to reverse course. Regrettably, that day has yet to come.

STD RATES HIT RECORD HIGH

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the latest data on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs):

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has declared April to be STD Awareness Month. The latest data show that “STDs are at a record high.”

Chlamydia is the most common STD; there was a 5 percent increase between 2015 and 2016. Gonorrhea is the second most common STD; its numbers shot up by 19 percent. Syphilis is third; it spiked by 18 percent. Who is most likely to suffer from these STDs? Young people aged 15-24, gay and bisexual men, and pregnant women.

According to the CDC, “sexually active young people are at a higher risk of getting chlamydia,” and this is true of gonorrhea and syphilis as well. “This is due to behaviors and biological factors common among young people. Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men are also at risk since

chlamydia can spread through oral and anal sex.”

What does the CDC suggest we do about this crisis? “Talk, Test, and Treat.” Talk openly about STDs, get tested, and get treated.

When the CDC says that “sexually active young people are at a higher risk” of getting an STD, what it really means is that promiscuity can be dangerous, even lethal. It should say so.

When it says that there are “behaviors and biological factors common among young people,” that contribute to STDs, what it means is that such things as binge drinking and risky behaviors can be dangerous, even lethal. It should say so.

When it says that men having sex with men are at greater risk of getting an STD, it means that sodomy can be dangerous, even lethal. It should say so.

Instead, the CDC says we need to “talk, test, and treat.” But that strategy, which has been tried for decades, has obviously failed.

So why do we have record rates of STDs? Recklessness for one. And to some degree the problem is iatrogenic, that is, it is doctor induced. To be specific, lame advice by the CDC (and others in the medical field) is at least partially responsible for this epidemic.

Instead of challenging young people, heterosexual or homosexual, to practice restraint, we ask them to have a conversation about their behavior. Unfortunately, the conversation never centers on why they are abusing their body, or why they are infecting unsuspecting partners. And it surely never touches on guilt.

The current situation is so perverse that we now have a toy company, GIANTmicrobes, based in Stamford, Connecticut, “rebranding STDs as ‘charming’ and ‘cuddly’ with a line of

stuffed animals based on venereal diseases in honor of STD Awareness Month.”

The company has released a statement saying, “Love might be in the air this spring, but just remember to stay safe and keep clean this 2018, and know GIANTmicrobes STDs are on the prowl and just can’t wait to jump in your pants!”

According to the owner of this company, Andrew Klein, the reason for this campaign is to “break the stigma surrounding STDs.”

The man is positively clueless. Never before has there been less stigma attached to reckless sex than there is today, and never before have the STD rates been higher. When stigma was severe—in the 1950s—the rates were incredibly low.

We have no problem stigmatizing smokers, but we have a real problem stigmatizing those who engage in reckless sex. So stigmatization is not a taboo among the cultural elite—it just depends on whether the subject is smoking or sodomy.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD’S ABORTION FIXATION

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Planned Parenthood president Cecile Richards:

In her recently published memoir, outgoing Planned Parenthood president Cecile Richards says that in January 2017 she and her husband met with Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner. She claims that Kushner floated the idea that if Planned Parenthood stopped providing abortions, federal

funding for the organization would proceed smoothly.

Richards, who said “it almost felt like a bribe,” is still incensed by the comment. To her, it was a ploy to make Ivanka and Jared look like “savvy dealmakers.” Richards insists she was “essentially being asked to barter away women’s rights for more money.” Which is an odd thing to say given that exploiting women for money is what Planned Parenthood does for a living.

Predictably, the Kushners are being blasted by the champions of abortion, and Richards is being received as a heroine. But why?

Richards is playing both sides of the street. When pressed why Planned Parenthood is so fixated on abortion, she and her spokeswomen point to its latest annual report (2016-2017) to show that only 3 percent of its services have anything to do with abortion. Most of its work, they say, deals with such issues as testing and treatment, cancer screening, contraception, sex education, and other women’s health services.

If this is true, then why are Richards and her fans so upset by Ivanka and Jared’s proposal?

To put it differently, if the head of a large-scale organization were given the opportunity to rid himself of a public relations nightmare—caused by a mere 3 percent of his company’s work—in exchange for assurances that the other 97 percent of its operations could continue without a snag, wouldn’t he grab the offer with dispatch? Unless, of course, the 3 percent of the organization’s work is its *raison d’être*.

Hugh Hefner justified his porn rag by saying that only 10 percent of *Playboy* featured nudity, the other 90 percent being dedicated to essays, advice columns, interviews with famous persons, and the like. Yet everyone knew that absent the photos, few would buy the magazine.

Similarly, Planned Parenthood is obsessed with abortion. It is its signature issue. Let's face it, abortion is what makes it tick—not medication management.

Take away abortion and Planned Parenthood morphs into another run-of-the-mill clinic, driving away its donors, and enervating its passion. In short, abortion is not an option for Planned Parenthood—it is an imperative.