

BENEDICT XVI INCURS WRATH OF CRITICS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on reaction to an essay released last week by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI:

If only he would just shut up. That is the consensus of liberal and dissident Catholics to the brilliant essay by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI on the roots of clergy sexual abuse. They made it clear that their support for dialogue is a ruse.

The first sentence of the front-page news story in the April 12 edition of the *New York Times* set the tone: "In his retirement, Pope Benedict XVI is apparently tired of hiding." The next sentence notes that he previously "declared he would 'remain hidden to the world.'"

Get it? He should have stayed under his rock.

Why the anger? The *Times* says that his essay "amounted to the most significant undercutting yet of the authority of Pope Francis," a view also held by John Thavis; he used to pose as a non-partisan journalist for the Catholic News Service.

The Catholic Left, after decades of criticizing Saint John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, have become very protective of Pope Francis. They are upset with Benedict for raising issues they prefer not to talk about. Like homosexuality.

Julie Hanlon Rubio, who teaches at the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University, is angered at the retired pope's "willingness to blame a permissive culture and progressive theology for a problem that is internal and structural." Rachel Donadio of *The Atlantic* finds it "strange" for him to talk about the "destabilizing" forces of the sexual revolution. Similarly, Thomas Farrell at the website opednews finds such talk "rubbish."

It is fun to watch this dance. Usually, we are told that we cannot understand any social problem unless we come to grips with the environment that unleashed it. But when it comes to offering a root cause analysis of the clergy abuse scandal, we are told to focus on internal Church issues, not the cultural milieu in which it was embedded. In other words, we are expected to believe the scandal took place in a social vacuum.

Brian Flanagan at Marymount University says that to blame the 1960s and “a supposed collapse of moral theology” is “embarrassingly wrong.”

From Marquette University we learn that theology professor James Bretzke says it is wrong to say that “liberal theologians” fostered an irresponsible sexual ethics that helped to create the problem.

They are in denial. Are they aware of a book by Anthony Kosnik, *Human Sexuality*, which was supported by the Catholic Theological Society of America? Or how about a book by the same title by Crooks and Bauer? These three authors maintain that there is no such thing as a deviant sexual act, and both volumes were assigned reading in many seminaries in the 1970s. Wouldn't this suggest a collapse of moral theology?

Some try to say that the sexual revolution had nothing to do with the problem because clergy sexual abuse occurred before the 1960s. This is the position taken by *Washington Post* columnist David Von Drehle. It is also accepted by Andrew Chesnut; he teaches Catholic Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. Church historian Christopher Bellitto subscribes to this view as well.

It won't work. Every study on the subject has shown that there was no crisis until the 1960s. Obviously, there were cases of abuse in the previous decades, but most of those priests who had sick urges kept them in check, until, that is, there was no penalty for acting out. Just read what happened in Boston.

Some are chagrined because Benedict only spoke about the abuser, not the enabling bishop. Michael Sean Winters feels this way. Tom Kington of the *Los Angeles Times* shares this view, saying the essay was “incendiary” for not discussing what Pope Francis stressed, namely the role of clericalism.

At least Winters and Kington don’t look as clueless as Bellitto or David Gibson. The former says, “The essay essentially ignores what we learned there,” a reference to the February summit in Rome on this subject. Gibson, the director of Fordham’s Center on Religion and Culture, said that Benedict’s essay “runs against everything said and done at the February summit.”

Precisely. And for good reason—the summit never addressed why molesting priests acted out. It was content to discuss why some bishops made lousy decisions. Clericalism may account for why some bishops were enablers, but it is of no explanatory value understanding why abusing priests did what they did. It took Benedict to bring balance to the discussion.

It is impossible to honestly engage the issue of clergy sexual abuse without explaining the role of homosexual priests, though Benedict’s critics try to do so.

For example, we have the spectacle of New Ways Ministry, a totally discredited outfit, telling us it is a “red herring” to mention homosexuals. Jamie Manson at the *National Catholic Reporter*, which is also partly responsible for the crisis, tells us that Benedict’s “radically homophobic theology” is responsible for the homosexual subculture.

Finally, we have Massimo Faggioli from Villanova University. He tries to deflect the obvious—the pernicious role played by homosexual priests in the scandal. He provides a link to one of the John Jay reports on the subject, as if that settles the issue.

This is a familiar retort, and it is unpersuasive. The John

Jay researchers did an excellent job assembling the data—there is no reason to conclude that the two studies were deficient in terms of their methodology or data collection—but as with any study, conclusions drawn from the data are open to interpretation.

The researchers report that 8 in 10 of the molesting priests had sex with postpubescent males, and that less than five percent of them were pedophiles. There is only one word in the English language to describe such behavior: homosexuality.

Yet the researchers conclude that homosexuality is not the issue. How did they manage to skirt the obvious? They said not all the priests who had sex with adolescents identified themselves as homosexuals.

Now if the homosexual priests identified themselves as heterosexuals, would anyone in his right mind conclude that heterosexuals accounted for most of the problem? Self-identification is an interesting psychological variable, but it is not a substitute for drawing truthful conclusions based on behavior. A dwarf is still a dwarf even if he stands on stilts and announces he is no longer a dwarf.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI did the Catholic Church a great public service in outlining his thoughts on priestly sexual abuse, and there is nothing his detractors can do about it.

IS FOX NEWS LOSING ITS NERVE?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments about an incident on Fox News yesterday:

Yesterday, shortly before Neil Cavuto's show on Fox News aired

at 4:00 p.m. ET, I was asked if I would go on with him, by phone, to discuss the Notre Dame fire. I agreed.

I was shocked when Neil cut me off, simply because I entertained the thought that it might be terrorism. I did not mention any religious or secular group that may have been involved, and indeed would not have speculated at all were it not for a recent series of ugly anti-Catholic events in France.

Here is what I said.

“Well, Neil, if it is an accident, it’s a monumental tragedy, but forgive me for being suspicious. Just last month, a 17th century church was set on fire in Paris. We have seen Tabernacles knocked down, crosses have been torn down, statues have been smashed.”

Neil said, “Bill, we don’t know that, we don’t know. So if we can avoid what your suspicions might be, I do want to look at what happens now.”

Neil is wrong. We do know that. In fact, it already happened. I was trying to put the Notre Dame fire in context.

After another exchange, I went back to my point saying, “I’m sorry, when I find out that the Eucharist is being destroyed and excrement is being smeared on crosses—this is what’s going on now.” Neil cut me off saying, “Wait a minute, Bill. I love you dearly, but we cannot make conjectures about this so thank you, Bill. I’m sorry, thank you very, very much.”

I have known Neil for a long time. He’s a good guy. But what he did yesterday was unfair. My guess is he was following the marching orders from above.

If Fox News wants to be agnostic on the origins of the Notre Dame fire, that’s fine. But when hosts won’t allow guests to have their own opinion—even when it is couched in entirely

reasonable terms—then it's clear that Fox has a problem. Is it losing its nerve?

CISCO DISCRIMINATES AGAINST CATHOLICS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the discriminatory policies of CISCO Systems and the CISCO Foundation:

Cisco Systems, the multinational technology behemoth, has a reputation for fostering tolerance, diversity, and inclusion. It is undeserved. When it comes to Catholics, it makes an exception. As will be revealed, it also has a problem with others.

Just this month, Belen Jesuit Preparatory School in Miami was turned down by Cisco for participation in the company's matching gift program. The reason? It's Catholic. Of course, Cisco never came right out and admitted to its bigotry. It's too clever for that.

After the Catholic school submitted its application, it was asked whether it was in compliance with CISCO's non-discrimination policy. Like all Catholic schools, Belen Jesuit doesn't discriminate against anyone—not in hiring or in its student body population. But that wasn't sufficient to satisfy CISCO.

"Please confirm that your non-profit organization does not require exposure, adherence, or conversion to any religious doctrine for students and employees, and that you serve all faiths and the community at large. For example, do you require

attendance at religious services?"

This was the question, based on CISCO's policy on "religious proselytizing." It has no policy on "secular proselytizing."

CISCO is a private company so it can pretty much do what it wants. This means, however, that because it is not subject to the First Amendment, it cannot trot out the so-called establishment clause to justify its policy.

To put it differently, there is no separation of church and state issue here—CISCO's policy is purely a reflection of its own values. Those values are secular in nature. That they evince a clear animus against religion is not debatable.

CISCO is playing a game. It says Catholic schools can qualify for admission to its matching gift program provided they don't expose students to Catholicism, or expect them to adhere to Catholic teachings. In other words, if Catholic schools cease to be Catholic, they can qualify.

CISCO should simply admit to its bigotry and not try to play a Catch-22 game with Catholics. This ploy is reminiscent of white racist polling officials down South who once tested for citizenship by having one set of questions for prospective white voters and another set for blacks.

Whites were asked questions such as, "Who was the first president of the United States?" Blacks were asked the wording of Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution. As some astute blacks answered at the time, "That's easy. It says no blacks are going to vote here."

Belen Jesuit made the point that students and parents freely decide to enroll in the school, knowing full well its strictures. Theology classes are required, and while religions other than Catholicism are presented, most of the classes are not about Buddhism. Students are expected to attend Mass, but

no one is required to go to communion. That didn't cut it with CISC0: application denied.

What makes CISC0 tick? Its values are not merely secular—they are radically secular.

- In 2017, when a bill was being considered in Texas that would ban males who think they are females from showering with elementary and secondary school girls, CISC0 opposed it.
- In 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court decided, 7-2, to affirm the right of a Christian baker not to personalize a gay wedding cake. CISC0 filed an amicus brief on the losing side trying to strip him of his religious liberty.
- Last month, when a bill was introduced in Congress that would add sexual orientation and gender identity to the 1964 Civil Rights Act (it has failed repeatedly), CISC0 supported it. The bill would grant preferential treatment in hiring to homosexuals and to men who think they are women, and vice versa.
- The Southern Poverty Law Center, a far-left entity that brands Christian family organizations as hate groups, is lavishly funded by CISC0.

How clean is CISC0? Not very.

CISC0 has had a string of serious complaints made against it for age discrimination. There are also racial issues. Last year it was sued for racial discrimination by a black woman. In 2018, federal investigators found that it discriminated against American workers; it prefers to hire foreign nationals over U.S. citizens. Regarding the latter, the Department of Labor found that CISC0 “secured visas for foreign workers instead of hiring U.S. citizens for certain jobs and paid the visa holders at a lower rate than their American counterparts.”

In short, CISC0 funds left-wing causes, especially those that

work against religious liberty, and has had its fair share of unjust labor practices.

More important, it has no tolerance for the diversity that Catholic schools offer, preferring to exclude them from its commitment to inclusion. No wonder it is located in the Silicon Valley, home to Marxist millionaires who say one thing and do another.

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BUTTIGIEG'S RELIGION AGENDA

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on presidential hopeful Pete Buttigieg:

South Bend mayor Pete Buttigieg has chosen Palm Sunday to announce his presidential bid. It is no accident: It accurately reflects his religion agenda.

"A devoted Episcopalian who fluidly quotes Scripture and married his husband, Chasten, in a church service last year, Mr. Buttigieg is making the argument that marriage is a moral issue." That's the way the *New York Times* described him on April 11.

It is not clear what a devoted Episcopalian looks like. Although the official position of the Episcopal church today has abandoned two thousand years of biblical teaching on the subject of marriage—it accepts marriage between two men and two women—there are many Episcopalians in the United States, including bishops, who consider themselves devout precisely because they have not rejected what the Bible says.

Why is the *Times* crediting Buttigieg for "making the argument

that marriage is a moral issue"? No argument needs to be made—it is axiomatic. The paper makes it sound as if it only became a moral issue recently.

What the *Times* is getting at is Buttigieg's bid to cast marriage as a moral issue—even for homosexual unions—so he can seize the issue from evangelical Christians, traditional Catholics, and others. Good luck with that.

The fact is that the Democratic Party has aligned itself with the secularist agenda for the last half century. That agenda is hostile to religious liberty, even if some, such as Barack Obama, have been known for their God-talk skills. The reason Democrats put up with Obama's religion-friendly words is that they knew he would not make good on them. Deeds are what counts, and on that score, Obama never disappointed his base.

Buttigieg is cut from the same cloth. He will not allow his God-talk to be controlling, because if it did, he would alienate those who like him but have a phobia (or worse) about religion. They need not worry—he is a loyal soldier in the secularist war on religion.

Buttigieg knows that Democrats are leery of talking about freedom these days. They prefer to talk about equality, social justice, climate change, and the like. This explains why he recently told George Stephanopoulos, "when we talk about freedom, I think Democrats need to be much more comfortable getting into that vocabulary. Conservatives care a lot about one kind of freedom and it's freedom from. Freedom from regulation, freedom from government," etc.

But it is not conservatives who support the Freedom From Religion Foundation—it's liberals like Buttigieg. Similarly, it is liberals, not conservatives, who treat the public expression of religion as if it were some sort of communicable disease. Conservatives want a robust public expression of religion.

In the run-up to his presidential announcement, Buttigieg spent a lot of time trashing Vice President Mike Pence. Casting Pence as the bad guy is part of his religion agenda.

By attacking Pence he hopes to steal the mantle of religion. This won't be easy. After all, Pence supports religious liberty legislation, and Buttigieg does not. So who does the South Bend mayor think he can pick off? Surely not regular church-goers—they support the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA).

Buttigieg attacks Pence for signing an Indiana law in 2015, when he was governor, that was based on the federal RFRA. That law, which was supported by Democrats and Republicans alike, and signed by President Bill Clinton in 1993, stated that the government could not substantially burden religious exercise without compelling justification; even then it had to be done in the least restrictive way.

What changed between 1993 and 2015 was support by Democrats for gay rights. When gay rights conflict with religious liberty, Democrats choose the former over the latter. Never mind that religious liberty is a First Amendment right, and that gay rights, as in marriage equality, are nowhere mentioned in the Constitution.

Buttigieg could have decided to simply say that he favors gay rights over religious liberty, but that would have deprived him of seizing the high moral ground. So he elected to set Pence up as his straw man so he could appear to be the real moral agent.

"If me being gay was a choice," Buttigieg recently said, "it was a choice that was made far, far above my pay grade. And that's the thing I wish the Mike Pences of the world would understand. That if you got a problem with who I am, your problem is not with me—your quarrel, sir, is with my creator."

That was a clever, if totally dishonest, ploy. Pence never

once criticized Buttigieg for being gay, and if he did, the whole world would have known about it. The difference between the two men is over policy, not one's persona.

When Buttigieg "came out" in 2015, that is, letting everyone know he is a homosexual, his governor, Mike Pence, said, "I hold Mayor Buttigieg in the highest personal regard. I see him as a dedicated public servant and a patriot." Those are not the words of a gay basher, and it is malicious of Buttigieg to characterize him as such.

When Buttigieg and Pence first met, the mayor spoke highly of his governor. In 2011, he said that despite Pence being known as a "conservative warrior," he found him to be "affable, even gentle." The evidence shows that it is Buttigieg, not Pence, who changed.

"If I saw a restaurant owner refuse to serve a gay couple, I wouldn't eat there anymore." We would expect that Buttigieg would say something like that, and not someone like Pence. Yet those are Pence's exact words, as spoken in 2015.

We know from survey research that most people see a profound difference between denying a gay couple the right to buy a cake in a bakery, and forcing a practicing Christian baker to personalize a gay wedding cake. The former is a matter of discrimination against the gay couple's equal rights; the latter is a matter of discrimination against the baker's religious rights.

Buttigieg disagrees. Fine. Then let him make his case against religious liberty without setting himself up as a religious moralizer. And let him do so without demonizing those with whom he disagrees. That would be the Christian thing to do.

BENEDICT XVI ANALYZES ROOTS OF THE SCANDAL

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an article written by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI:

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has released a lengthy essay on the roots of clergy sexual abuse that is illuminating and courageous. It is illuminating because he shows how forces inside and outside the Church came together to create the problem, and it is courageous because he speaks the truth about matters that are already causing an uproar.

Benedict is no stranger to this subject. He previously condemned the “filth” in the Church that allowed for the scandal, and he did more to remove miscreant priests than either his predecessor or successor. He defrocked some 800 priests, including the notorious Father Marcial Maciel Degollado. Now he tackles the issue again, this time with a blend of sociological and theological observations that are profound.

The Pope Emeritus starts with a macro sociological perspective, one that places the abuse scandal in social context. It is simply impossible to understand what happened, he says, without referencing the force of the sexual revolution.

It is not a coincidence that sexual abuse flourished in the Church at the same time that celebrations of sexual libertinism flourished outside the Church. The latter helped set the stage for the former. It was the triumph of moral relativism—the denial of moral absolutes—that helped to cripple the Church.

Benedict puts his finger on a harsh reality: Dissent in the Church peaked at the same time that the scandal unfolded.

Catholic moral theology, which was always grounded in natural law, was abandoned in exchange for a more relativistic approach, one that denied the existence of evil. This was taught in the seminaries at the time. Not only that, but books by Benedict were censored.

When pornographic films are shown to seminarians, and a gay subculture is tolerated, Benedict notes, it is hardly surprising to learn that sexual misconduct will grow by leaps and bounds. "In various seminaries homosexual cliques were established," he writes, "which acted more or less openly and significantly changed the climate in the seminaries." The climate that emerged was toxic.

At bottom, Benedict stresses, the scandal is rooted in a crisis of faith. When the very existence of God is questioned, and when moral certainty dissipates—even with regard to foundational principles—then mere opinion becomes the new norm. This is a dangerous slope; it resulted in many sins, including priestly sexual abuse.

Some readers may think that Benedict exaggerates when he writes about pedophilia being seen as legitimate "only a short time ago." But it was. Indeed, in some quarters, especially among intellectuals and celebrities, it still is. Recall that just recently Barbra Streisand justified Michael Jackson's alleged sexual abuse of children.

"His sexual needs were his sexual needs, coming from whatever childhood he has or whatever DNA he has. You can say 'molested,' but those children [two of his alleged victims], you heard them say, they were thrilled to be there. They both married and they both have children, so it didn't kill them." Streisand subsequently walked back her statement.

"Why did pedophilia reach such proportions?" Benedict poses the question and then nails it with precision. "Ultimately, the reason is the absence of God." Once that happens, evil can

triumph.

He provides an example. A chaplain who sexually abused a girl altar server “always introduced the sexual abuse he was committing against her with the words, ‘This is my body which will be given up to you.’” If that is not evil, then the word has no meaning.

Benedict recognizes that the Church is a much better place today than it was at the height of the scandal. Reforms can and should be made, but he stresses the folly of trying to reinvent the Church. Indeed, he sees such proposals as the work of the devil. “The idea of a better Church, created by ourselves,” he says, “is in fact a proposal of the devil, with which he wants to take us away from the living God.”

What we need, Benedict argues, is greater respect for the Eucharist and the establishment of “habitats of Faith.” The appropriate corrective to sexual abuse, or any other plague on the Church, cannot be achieved absent a renewal of faith, grounded in eternal moral truths. Anything less will miss the mark.

Thank God we still have the seminal voice of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI to guide us. He is indispensable.

RHODE ISLAND TEACHERS’ UNIONS LOOK GUILTY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on testimony by the teachers’ unions in Rhode Island:

We live in an age where the slightest sexual infraction is

seen as a serious offense, especially when there is a perceived power imbalance between the offender and the victim. Disagreeing vehemently with this stance are the teachers' unions in Rhode Island. That they look guilty of tolerating sexual abuse is apparently of no consequence to them.

A bill has been introduced in the Rhode Island legislature that would make it a third-degree sexual assault for any school employee to have sex with a student between the ages of 14 and 18. Currently, it is not a crime for someone to have sex with a minor unless the person is under 14. Opposing the bill are the state's two teachers' unions.

On April 1, Pat Crowley of the state chapter of the National Education Association (NEA) noted his opposition to the bill at a hearing, though he did not elaborate. On April 8, Robert Walsh, the executive director of the NEA Rhode Island defended the organization's opposition while saying, "It is patently ridiculous for anyone to imply that our organization, or any individual teacher, would condone any inappropriate relationship between a teacher and his or her students."

What is patently ridiculous is to claim how horrible it is for a student between the ages of 14 and 18 to be a victim of sexual assault by a public school employee while also objecting to legislation that would punish such conduct. The power disparity between an agent of the state and a teenager should be obvious, even to lobbyists.

The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) in Rhode Island was represented by James Parisi. On April 8 he made the same argument he made a week earlier, noting the discriminatory nature of the legislation.

"You should include all the adults who have employment or other types of authority over 15-, 16- and 17-year-olds," Parisi said. He wanted to know why store managers, for example, weren't mentioned. The ACLU affiliate in Rhode Island

said the same thing, saying that to single out teachers is “arbitrary and capricious.”

What makes this argument so stunning is that the public schools have been protected in every state in the nation from the same legislation on this issue that applies to the Catholic Church. Whenever there is a bill that allows for the prosecution of old cases of abuse—extending back to World War II—the public schools are typically given an exemption.

Under the antiquated doctrine of sovereign immunity, a public school student who has been sexually abused by his teacher has only 90 days to file a complaint. That’s it. So if he was raped at Christmastime, and has not contacted the authorities, it is already too late. To hear the teachers’ unions now whine about being singled out is a bit too much.

As for the ACLU, any organization that defends the sale and distribution of child pornography cannot be expected to protect teenagers from being sexually assaulted by their teacher. Where is the ACLU when the Catholic Church is being singled out? Why aren’t those legislative efforts “arbitrary and capricious”?

The rap on the teachers’ unions has always been that they care more about the rights of teachers than the welfare of students. The NEA and UFT in Rhode Island just cemented that view.

We will contact the Rhode Island legislature about this issue.

NEW YORK TIMES COVERS “UNPLANNED”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a story in today's *New York Times* on “Unplanned”:

In the April 9 edition of the *New York Times*, there is a news story about the pro-life movie “Unplanned.” Of course, the term “pro-life” never appears—such persons are described as “being against abortion rights.” The words are chosen carefully: those who defend human rights *in utero* are against human rights.

The story starts with an observation about suburban theatergoers who saw the film last week. “A few—a gaggle of nuns in their habits, at least one collared priest—wore their dispositions on their sleeves. Others communicated in muted gestures, dabbed at tears, or lingered for long stretches in the popcorn-strewn vestibule at the AMC multiplex here, as if still processing the deliberately provocative movie they had just seen.”

The Cambridge English Dictionary defines “gaggle” as “a group of geese” or “a group of noisy or silly people.” We can assume that the reporter, Reggie Ugwu, was not referring to the nuns as “a group of geese.” That would make them “a group of noisy or silly people.”

The silly nuns were in habit. That makes sense given that pro-abortion nuns—I have met more than a few of them—tend to dress like social workers. The priest with a collar (note: even liberal priests wear a collar when they go on TV) was, like the silly nuns, making a statement with his garb, clearly wearing his “dispositions on his sleeve.”

It is true that when people witness a movie about the wanton destruction of babies they tend to well up. Either that or

they are sociopaths. And yes, there is much to process about a movie that is “deliberately provocative.” Films that honestly depict bodily invasions tend to be that way.

“Unplanned,” as many know, has been subject to considerable Hollywood censorship. Ugwu accurately recounts how requests for songs to be used in the movie were denied, as were most TV interviews. The film was slapped with an “R” rating, a deliberate act, and the movie’s Twitter account was temporarily disabled. When it comes to explaining why these things happened, Ugwu wears his dispositions on his sleeve.

“Of course, no film is entitled to media exposure.” That’s true. The same could be said about the failure of the *New York Times* to review the movie—like virtually every other major newspaper in the nation (the *Washington Post* being the lone exception)—but that doesn’t empty the discussion. Why the blackout?

Ugwu anticipates this question and has a ready answer. He opines that “the belief among anti-abortion communities that powerful forces have arrayed against the film has kindled long-smoldering claims of liberal and anti-religious bias in the media and Silicon Valley.”

That Hollywood and the Silicon Valley are liberal and anti-religious is about as controversial as saying the Bible Belt is conservative and religious. Only liars or the ignorant would deny it. They are also intolerant and censorial.

Ugwu notes in a parenthetical remark that Planned Parenthood released a statement saying the movie “promotes many falsehoods.” I checked the full statement, which is three sentences long, and it does not provide a single example of a falsehood. Surely they could cite one.

In the movie, there is an ultrasound picture of the baby flinching when pierced by the abortionist. This scene has upset a lot of people: some are upset at the violence and

others are upset because their argument implodes.

Ugwu says that this scene “shows a fetus with a discernible head, torso and limbs frantically squirming away from a doctor’s probe...before being liquefied by suction.” So there is a body other than that of the mother’s. And it moves. Temporarily that is.

He asked a doctor at the “nonpartisan American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists” about this scene and she said that the notion that the baby is “fighting for its life” is misleading; babies at 13 weeks cannot feel pain, she said.

There are two problems here. First of all, there is nothing “nonpartisan” about this woman—she performs abortions. Second, according to a study published in 2013 in the *Journal of Maternal-Fetal Neonatal Medicine*, “As early as 8 weeks the baby exhibits reflex movement during invasive procedures.”

So the question I have for Mr. Ugwu and his “nonpartisan” abortionist friend is, “If the baby cannot feel pain, why does he or she recoil when pierced?” Don’t adults recoil when pierced by a dentist?

I could not help but notice that in the same edition of the newspaper there is an article about a change of leadership at *The Nation* magazine. It noted that the far-left publication was founded by abolitionists in 1865. What it didn’t mention is that it strongly defended, and lied about, the mass murders committed by Stalin and Mao. If a magazine defended, and lied about, Hitler, it would surely be noted.

Abortion and communism have much in common: both are stories about the killing of innocents. And in both stories, the paper covered them up. This is what makes the *New York Times* tick.

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NEW YORKER PIECE ON CHURCH FALLS FLAT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an article in the *New Yorker* that is critical of the Catholic Church:

Paul Elie is in a constant state of discontent over the Catholic Church. He once championed the voice of pro-abortion Catholic women, and he was never happy with Saint John Paul II or Pope Benedict XVI. The Georgetown professor has also counseled Catholics not to go to church during Lent. Now he is back, this time taking aim at the compensation program for alleged victims in the New York Archdiocese.

Elie's article is a rambling, disconnected search for dirt. His most senior indictment is the Church's evasive practices, made manifest in failing to disclose information he wants to see. Perhaps if he examined CBS News, "60 Minutes," or the Southern Poverty Law Center, he might be persuaded to praise the Church for its straightforward approach—those entities are masters at not revealing information. And they get away with it.

"What Do the Church's Victims Deserve?" is the title of Elie's piece. The subtitle is more revealing: "The Catholic Church is turning to outside arbiters to reckon with its history of sexual abuse. But skeptics argue that its legacy of evasion continues."

Those "skeptics," it turns out, include Marci Hamilton and Mitchell Garabedian, two lawyers who love to find clients who agree to sue the Church. They are not skeptics: They are Church-hating activists.

If the compensation program started by Cardinal Timothy Dolan is nothing but a PR stunt, as the “skeptics” argue, then why, as even Elie has to admit, has the bar been set so low for claimants to win? One of the persons who runs the Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program, Kenneth Feinberg, refers to “our lenient standards of evidence.” He said the program pays on “weak claims” in order to achieve “a collective sense of reconciliation.”

That doesn’t sound like a PR stunt. By contrast, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio continues to defend a program for alleged victims of city employees that sets the bar very high. Dolan could have insisted on such a measure but he did not.

Once the compensation program is over there will be no need to keep the records indefinitely. This bothers Elie. Camille Biros, who works with Feinberg, told Elie the records will be kept for a while, set by “standard operating procedures,” and then destroyed. Elie brands this as “evasion.”

A more honest rendering would be to acknowledge that Feinberg and Biros are veterans at this kind of work. Dolan hired Feinberg precisely because he was a leading arbitration and mediation expert who dealt with the relatives of 9/11 victims, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the Boston Marathon bombing, and other cases. In other words, when Biros speaks about “standard operating procedures,” she speaks with authority. Elie may not like it, but not keeping the records indefinitely is the norm.

The bias that Elie sports is on grand display when he indicts the bishops for the Dallas Charter and the John Jay reports on clergy sexual abuse. He accuses the bishops of “prudery, euphemism, and evasion.” Why? Because neither document cites a specific incident of abuse.

There is a reason for that: Neither report was designed to address individual cases. Both are macro reports that seek to

understand the issue of the sexual abuse of minors.

The Dallas Charter authorized a National Review Board to investigate wrongdoing; it also lists procedures for dioceses/eparchies to follow. One of the John Jay reports offers a treasure of data on abuse extending back to 1950; the other attempts to explain why it occurred. None of this has anything to do with “prudery.”

At the end of the article, Elie makes plain his criticism of Cardinal Dolan for not telling him exactly what Auxiliary Bishop John J. Jenik did to merit his removal; he was accused of abusing a minor decades ago. But this gotcha game is absurd. Earlier in the article Elie explains what the alleged victim said happened. What more does he want?

The article is chock full of information. Yet it goes nowhere. Indeed, it falls flat.

BUTTIGIEG’S DISHONESTY IS ASTONISHING

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg:

South Bend, Indiana mayor Pete Buttigieg is being hailed in some quarters as an honest man who would make a good president. Picking up on this image, he is now selling himself as a committed Christian, one who is much more broad minded than Christian conservatives.

When asked by Kirsten Powers this week about his favorite Bible verses, his first response was to cite a passage from

Matthew: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these...you did for me."

Who would qualify as being among "the least of these?" Surely those who are unable to defend themselves. Not to Buttigieg—unborn babies fail to make the cut. When asked about late-term abortions on MSNBC, he defended them, citing his objections to "involvement of a male government."

That was a dishonest answer. Buttigieg knows very well that whether the government is run by males or females, or a combination of both, such characteristics have absolutely nothing to do with judging the morality of late-term abortions. On another occasion he said, "I don't think we need more restrictions [on abortion] right now." A more honest answer would have been to say "not now, not ever."

Buttigieg's slipperiness was on display last year when he was faced with making a decision to allow a crisis pregnancy center (CPC) to locate next to an abortion clinic in South Bend. Lawmakers approved rezoning, thereby allowing for the CPC, but Buttigieg vetoed the bill. He feigned distress over his decision, offering two reasons why he had to say no. Both were dishonest.

"Issues on the legality or morality of abortion are dramatically beyond my paygrade as a mayor," he said. Then he should resign. Public figures are expected to make moral judgments about contemporary issues. More important, Buttigieg has no business running for president. If an issue such as abortion is beyond his paygrade, then he is not suited for the job.

Buttigieg, of course, was being dishonest. He has an opinion—he is solidly in the pro-abortion camp.

It was his other reason for banning a CPC that was not only dishonest, it was demagogic. Buttigieg cited potential clashes between the abortion clinic and the CPC. Thus, by sleight of

hand he secured the right of the abortion clinic to operate, without allowing women an alternative voice.

Fort Wayne-South Bend Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades saw right through Buttigieg's ploy. "I share the mayor's concern about the neighborhood," he said, "but for a different reason: a group from outside our community and state may open that not only discards innocent human life, but purports to give women a choice, when in fact it has vigorously opposed the Women's Care Center [the CPC] that provides loving support for women and the choice to say yes to life."

Buttigieg offered another dishonest reason for not allowing the CPC to locate next to the abortion clinic. "I saw data that there was about triple the rate of violence or harassment issues when a clinic is located next to a crisis pregnancy center," he said. The implication is that it is the CPC, not the abortion clinic, that is the occasion for trouble.

"Where I practice in Tuscaloosa, Alabama," an abortionist said last year, "the crisis pregnancy center is right next door to the abortion clinic and I've had patients who have eventually made it to me to receive abortion services who said their care was delayed because they were not told that they were next door to the facility they were seeking to enter." He said nothing about harassment or violence being a problem, only that his customers were delayed in finding him.

If there were problems of true harassment or violence accompanying the location of a CPC near an abortion clinic, such stories should not be hard to find, especially from abortion-friendly sources.

The Guttmacher Institute is the nation's foremost pro-abortion research entity; it was once affiliated with Planned Parenthood. "The Public Health Risks of Crisis Pregnancy Centers" was published by Guttmacher in 2012 by Joanne D. Rosen. There is no mention of harassment or violence.

In 2015, NARAL, the pro-abortion giant, published "Crisis Pregnancy Centers Lie: The Insidious Threat to Reproductive Freedom." It listed 107 citations covering a lot of ground. There is no mention of harassment or violence.

In 2017, NARAL published a 16-page article, "The Truth about Crisis Pregnancy Centers." There is no mention of harassment or violence.

In 2017, Beth Holtzman published a 34-page article, "Have Crisis Pregnancy Centers Finally Met Their Match: California's Reproductive FACT Act,"; it appeared in the *Northwestern Journal of Law & Public Policy*. There was no mention of harassment or violence.

In 2018, multiple authors published an article, "Why Crisis Pregnancy Centers Are Legal but Unethical," in the *AMA Journal of Ethics*. There is no mention of harassment or violence.

So where are the data that Buttigieg claims he "saw"? "The 2015 Violence and Disruption Statistics" published by the National Abortion Federation lists instances of harassment (e.g., picketing) and some violence, but it attributes *none* to CPCs.

The one source that appears to back his claim is the "2018 National Clinic Violence Survey," published by the Feminist Majority Foundation. It claims that when a CPC is located near an abortion clinic, the latter is seven times more likely to experience harassment or violence than one located further away.

There are several problems with this study. First, this pro-abortion organization did not simply publish this survey, it conducted it. In other words, it violated a central tenet of survey research: it did not outsource the survey to an independent research institute.

Also, researchers look to see the framing of the questions

that respondents are asked. This survey offers none, just capsule summaries.

Perhaps the biggest flaw of all is the failure to consider whether CPCs are more likely to experience harassment or violence when situated near an abortion clinic. There is ample evidence that this is not uncommon. Consider the following underreported news story.

“An 85-year-old pro-life man was assaulted as he prayed outside a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic in San Francisco last Thursday and it was captured on camera. In the 22-second clip, an alleged Planned Parenthood supporter knocks the pro-life advocate, identified as Ron, to the ground, tells him to stay on the ground, then repeatedly kicks him as he tries to take away the ‘40 Days for Life’ banner for which Ron was peacefully protesting.”

This didn’t happen years ago—it happened at the end of last month.

“Clash Outside Planned Parenthood in Naples Sends One Man to Hospital for Injuries.” This was the headline of a story from October, 2018. A 65-year-old man, Joe Alger, was saying the rosary near a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic when he was assaulted.

“The unidentified man got close to Alger’s face and punched him, and Alger was knocked to the ground and punched a second time.” A Planned Parenthood spokeswoman told reporters that “a fight broke out.” Not true. A senior citizen was assaulted by a pro-abortion thug because he was saying the rosary.

Many other examples could be given. Pro-life offices have been torched, and many pro-life leaders have received death threats. Moreover, pro-life supporters on college campuses, especially women, are harassed and intimidated with regularity. It is therefore dishonest for Buttigieg to hold CPCs responsible for harassment or violence against abortion

clinics.

Most Americans have never heard of Pete Buttigieg. The media, having found a young homosexual presidential candidate they like, are offering a sympathetic portrait of him. On closer inspection, however, he appears coy and dishonest, and not the least bit interested in serving “the least among us.”

MICHIGAN AG DANA NESSEL IS A DISASTER

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the latest controversy enveloping Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel:

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel is a disaster. She can't seem to shake charges of bigotry. Worse, she has no problem condemning bigotry when the victims are non-Catholics. Not to worry, Catholics are taking note of her selective interest in justice.

The latest controversy that Nessel is embroiled in concerns new charges of anti-Catholic bigotry, this time coming from Michigan State Rep. Beau LaFave, not the Catholic League.

He is incensed over a retweet by Nessel that cited the hiring of a retired judge by Michigan State University to address sexual abuse. The tweet in question noted his ties to the Catholic Church. LaFave further noted Nessel's previous comments attacking Catholicism.

Nessel's communications director, Kelly Rossman-McKinney, tried to deflect criticism of her boss' problems by claiming victim status. She said that when Nessel told parishioners

that if investigators contact them, "please ask for their badge, not their rosary," some of the 500 emails were "vile and hateful," noting one anti-Semitic comment.

Those emails were sent in response to our news release condemning Nessel for her anti-Catholic remark; we listed Rossman-McKinney's email address in my statement. Never once did I cite Nessel's Jewish heritage. For good reason: a) it is irrelevant and b) I never knew she was Jewish until now.

What is most striking about Nessel's response is her condemnation of homophobia (she is a lesbian activist), anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia. She cited the latter in reference to some of the comments made about Rep. Rashida Tlaib, the Muslim congresswoman who has made a series of incendiary remarks.

Nessel did not include anti-Catholicism in her list of bigoted genres of speech that she deplores. Maybe that's because of her contributions to it. To wit: She has only been in office for a few months and has already drawn the attention of the Catholic League on several occasions.

On October 2, 2018, before Nessel won the election, we noted that Michigan Catholics had better brace themselves if she wins: She flat out said she would not enforce a religious liberty bill that protected the religious freedom of faith-based foster care and adoption services.

On February 25, 2019, we called her out for her anti-Catholic slur about asking investigators "for their badge, not their rosary."

On February 28, 2019, we drew attention to her religious profiling. To be exact, she singled out the Catholic Church for a probe of sexual abuse, never explaining why no other institution was targeted.

In that same news release, we provided her with a list of

recent examples about Michigan kids being raped in the public schools. We even noted examples of the sexual abuse of minors taking place in her state by doctors, lawyers, family members, online predators, and law enforcement personnel, as well as by teachers and administrators. Yet she concentrates only on Catholics.

On March 13, 2019, after Nessel went on the attack again (this time joined by Governor Gretchen Whitmer), we asked Michigan lawmakers to address the issue of sexual abuse in the public schools. When *USA Today* did a 50-state investigation of sexual abuse in the public schools, it gave Michigan a grade of "F." Ergo, it was unconscionable not to include the schools in a probe of wrongdoing.

On March 25, 2019, Nessel merited our response again, this time over making good on her campaign promise not to defend a religious liberty law that protects Catholic social service agencies from being encroached upon by the state.

Now we are in April and Nessel is back in the news for incurring the wrath of a lawmaker about her Catholic problem.

Where this will end no one knows. But bet on the Catholic League to respond to Nessel every time her anti-Catholic bigotry surfaces.

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