

# COVID'S IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH WORSENS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on how Covid-19 is affecting mental health:

Andrew Copson is the chief executive of Humanists UK. On August 27, he published a piece on the United Kingdom website, Politics, noting that coronavirus presents Brits with a novel challenge. "For the majority of Brits—more than 52% of whom identify as non-religious—this is the first time in living history that a crisis has been met without religion."

Copson is right about that. But his celebratory tone is undercut by his inability to cite data that support the secular approach to the pandemic. There is a reason for this: there aren't any.

At the end of June, there was a study published in the journal *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity* on how Covid-19 was affecting six nations, one of which was Britain. It concluded that depression and suicide have increased because of social isolation. In another study, led by Dr. Maria Loades, clinical psychologist at the University of Bath, researchers found that socially isolated children were suffering from high rates of depression and anxiety. *The British Journal of Psychiatry* concluded that in the early stage of the pandemic, "Self-harm, suicidal thoughts and abuse are already substantial problems in the UK."

The Brits are not alone. In China, there has been a spike in depression, anxiety, insomnia, and distress, and this is especially true of women, nurses and those who treat patients with Covid-19. In the United States, there is a plethora of evidence to show how the pandemic has impacted on mental health problems.

A poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that nearly half of Americans report that Covid-19 is harming their mental health. The August edition of *Psychiatry Research* found that loneliness, depression and suicide ideation had all increased since the pandemic. Similarly, a report from Mental Health America found that in June, daily screenings for anxiety or depression were up more than 400% compared to January.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that in the last week of June, "U.S. adults reported considerably elevated adverse mental health conditions associated with COVID-19." Even as early as March, the Disaster Distress Hotline for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration saw a 891% increase in callers compared to the previous year.

In other words, the *Washington Post* was right to observe in May that the pandemic was "pushing America into a mental health crisis." The same phenomenon is happening in the United Kingdom. Indeed, no nation has been spared.

This does not mean, however, that everyone is equally vulnerable. In virtually every study done on mental health, those who score high on religiosity (as measured by beliefs and practices) fare considerably better than their secular counterparts. The evidence is overwhelming.

No one knows this subject better than Dr. Harold J. Koenig. He is Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, and Associate Professor of Medicine, at Duke University. On May 8, the 2nd edition of the *Handbook of Spirituality, Religion, and Mental Health* was published by Koenig and David H. Rosmarin. They concluded, as Koenig found in two previous editions of this volume that he edited alone, those who take their religion seriously do better on mental and physical health measures than those who are without a religious affiliation.

Once the data are available on how religiosity has affected

mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is a sure bet that Mr. Copson's current state of eudemonia will wane. He may even seek to convert, just to play it safe.

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## MARGARET SANGER'S RACISM STILL DEFENDED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on attempts to salvage Margaret Sanger's racist history:

Aside from pro-abortion activists, everyone who has taken a serious look at the writings and speeches of Margaret Sanger admits that she was a racist. Indeed, she was as big a racist as any Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan ever was. The evidence is overwhelming. Yet there are those who are still trying to rescue her legacy. Worse, some are in total denial about her racism.

On July 21, Planned Parenthood of Greater New York announced it would remove Sanger's name from its Manhattan clinic. It cited her "harmful connections to the eugenics movement," as if that were breaking news; it has been known for a century. But it stopped short of calling her out for her racist agenda.

It is impossible to separate eugenics from racism: it was built on it. Angela Franks, who authored *Margaret Sanger's Eugenics Legacy*, said "she believed that if you eliminated the poor, then there would be no more poverty. Instead of eliminating the problem, she would eliminate the people who had the problem." That was the purpose of her birth control crusade.

The organization she launched continues to serve her goal of

eliminating the poor, albeit with greater certainty: it facilitates killing them *in utero*. This means, of course, that a disproportionate number of black babies are killed every year. Even today, almost 8 in 10 Planned Parenthood abortion clinics are in minority neighborhoods.

Sanger opened her first birth control clinic in Brooklyn in 1916. After officials at the abortion giant recently admitted that her record was tainted, they adjusted the section on their website titled, "100 Years Strong." In their concluding statement on "Margaret Sanger—Our Founder," they said, "Like all leaders—Sanger had many flaws."

In other words, Sanger's targeting of African Americans for extinction was merely a "flaw." This is the best Planned Parenthood can admit to today. If a white supremacist had her legacy, he would be condemned.

Sanger's friends in Marxist circles continue to defend her. "People's World," which is the successor of the Communist Party USA organ, the "Daily Worker," published a piece on August 6 saying, "While Sanger did have ideas we find intolerable today, *bigotry* and contempt for workers were not among them (my italic)."

Lying about Sanger's racist past is commonplace.

Ellen Chesler wrote the most celebrated volume on Sanger, *Women of Valor*. After carefully documenting all of Sanger's work that served racist causes, she concludes that while her subject was "rabidly anti-Catholic," she was not a racist. This is what happens when feminist ideology discolours the mind. It poisons the ability to reason.

Edwin Black wrote an influential book about Sanger's contribution to the eugenics movement, *War Against the Weak*. He admitted that "Sanger surrounded herself with some of the eugenics movement's most outspoken racists and white supremacists." He also wrote that "she openly welcomed"

racists and anti-Semites into “the birth control movement.” Yet, like Chesler, he still concludes that she “was not a racist.”

The most recent defender of Sanger’s racist history is Katha Pollitt, a pro-abortion extremist who writes for the *Nation*, a publication that defended Joseph Stalin. “For the record,” she says, “Margaret Sanger was not a racist.” Why not? Because prominent blacks supported her. The “exoneration by association” gambit fails: They may have supported her birth control policies, but they certainly did not support abortion. As late as 1963, Planned Parenthood admitted that “An abortion kills the life of the baby after it has begun.”

It does not help Pollitt’s case to cite H.G. Wells’ support for Sanger (Planned Parenthood also notes that he was her ally). He made clear his goal. “We want fewer and better children...and we cannot make the social life and the world-peace we are determined to make, with the ill-bred, ill-trained swarms of inferior citizens that you inflict upon us.”

In case Pollitt doubts who Wells was referring to, consider what Sanger said in her book, *Women, Morality, and Birth Control*. “We don’t want the word to get out that we want to exterminate the Negro population.” Moreover, Sanger constantly called those in the lower class “weeds” and “human waste” that must be “exterminated.”

While Sanger did not campaign to make abortion legal, it is intellectually dishonest to say she was viscerally opposed to abortion. Indeed, she supported infanticide. “The most merciful thing that the large family does to one of its infant members is to kill it.” Her honesty was commendable, even if her goal was evil.

Racism is what animated Planned Parenthood from its inception, and it is what motivates it today.

Two months ago, 300 of its staffers signed a letter condemning

the organization's "climate of systemic racism." That is an understatement. The workers were only referring to conditions in the workplace—they were not referring to the racist outcomes of their work.

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## **DEMS TELL THE FAITHFUL TO “GET LOST”**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on new problems for the Democrats:

Every survey in the last few decades shows that agnostics, atheists, and those with no religious affiliation have set anchor in the Democratic Party. By contrast, religious Americans are overwhelmingly Republican. The events at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) only made matters worse; a subsequent news story on this subject has now added more fuel to the fire.

Last week, anti-Semite activist Linda Sarsour spoke at the DNC. Why she was invited, when her hate speech—directed at both Jews and Israel—is well known does not speak well for the Biden-Harris camp. After word leaked out about Sarsour's participation in a council meeting, Biden spokesman Andrew Bates moved quickly to put an end to the controversy. He said Biden "obviously condemns her views."

However, after what recently happened, it is far from obvious that Biden "condemns her views."

On Sunday, the Biden campaign privately apologized to Sarsour. They expressed dismay over "the pain" that Arabs and Muslims felt when she was condemned. Coalitions director Ashley

Allison told Sarsour, "I am sorry that that happened." Tony Blinken, a foreign policy advisor to Biden, said, "My apologies for what we did and what happened."

So whose side is Biden on? This issue is further complicated when we consider that his running mate, Kamala Harris, has a similar problem with Catholics.

Harris has never apologized for her anti-Catholic attack on Brian Buescher, a federal district court nominee. In 2018, she went on the offensive against him because he belongs to a Catholic organization, one that is known for its adherence to the teachings of the Catholic Church on abortion. In effect, she invoked a religious test for the bench, something that is constitutionally prohibited.

The faithful were slapped in the face last week when the Muslim Delegates and Allies Assembly (which Sarsour participated in) deleted the words "under God" when they recited the Pledge of Allegiance. This was not an anomaly. The LGBTQ Caucus did the same.

Omitting reference to God is nothing new to Democrats. In 2012, the DNC threw God out: all references to God that were included in previous Platforms were excised. After a public relations embarrassment, God was reinserted. President Obama, who approved the Platform, had to personally intervene to make the revision.

Speaking of Obama, in 2010 he could not bring himself to utter the words "In God We Trust" when speaking in Indonesia about our national motto; instead, he substituted "E Pluribus Unum." Five years later at the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute's 33rd Annual Awards, the president never referenced God, or the "Creator," when citing the Declaration of Independence.

We heard much last week about Biden being a "man of faith." Let's say he is. Good for him. But what about the rest of us?

What specific *religious liberty policies* does he support? Why is his campaign silent on this issue? Moreover, the Democratic Party Platform has only six references to religion. It has 32 references to the LGBTQ agenda.

Taken together, all of these issues have the effect of telling religious Americans that they can “get lost.” What other conclusion are we to come to?

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## PRO-LIFE DEMOCRATS STRIKE OUT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the Democratic Party Platform:

Pro-life Democrats tried to persuade Joe Biden and the leadership of the Democratic Party to soften their language on abortion rights. But the 2020 Democratic Party Platform that passed on August 19 shows they lost. Indeed, they lost on every recommendation they made.

On May 12, Kristen Day, executive director of Democrats For Life of America (DFLA), wrote a letter to the members of the Platform Committee. She made four recommendations, three of which were specific.

- “Remove the language opposing the Hyde Amendment and Helms Amendment.” These amendments bar taxpayer-funded abortions.
- “Insert the following language committing to making abortion rare.” The paragraph begins by saying, “As Democrats, we support efforts to make abortions rare.” It then goes on to make the case for adoption.
- “Insert the following language on the diversity of opinion on abortion.” This calls on the Platform to

“respect the conscience of each American” on issues such as abortion.

The DFLA lost on all three. The Platform calls for “the repeal of the Hyde Amendment,” as well as the codification of “the right to reproductive freedom.” Furthermore, the Platform says nothing about making abortions “rare.” As for conscience rights, they are nowhere mentioned.

The DFLA must have known that Biden would never commit to making abortions “rare.” This explains why its second letter to the Platform Committee, issued three months later on August 14, only included reference to the first and third recommendations listed above. It was signed by more than 100 Democratic politicians.

There was a time, not too long ago, when Biden would have had no problem accepting all three recommendations. Indeed, he was never an extremist on abortion, until recently. Now he is: There is no abortion, at any time of pregnancy, or for any reason, that he finds objectionable.

In 1992, Bill Clinton made sure that the 1992 Democratic Party Platform included language saying abortion should be “safe, legal, and rare.” In 2008, Hillary Clinton, in the presidential primary, went so far as to say abortion should be “safe, legal, and rare, and by rare, I mean *rare*.”

This shows how extreme Biden has become. He does not want abortion to be rare, because if he did he would have adopted the language of the DFLA. That commits him to the most promiscuous exercise of abortion imaginable. What has happened to this professed Catholic?

The country has become more pro-life, yet Biden has become more pro-abortion. This makes no sense politically, never mind morally. But it's too late to change now. Biden has laid anchor with NARAL, the most rabid defender of abortion in the nation. In fact, they recently endorsed him.

Joe Biden and his Democratic Party Platform just shut the door tight on pro-life Democrats. Looks like the big tent has a hole in it after all.

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## CATHOLIC LEFT IS DECISIVELY PRO-ABORTION

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the Catholic Left's pro-abortion position:

Anyone who follows the Catholic Left knows that it rejects the Church's teachings on abortion, contraception, marriage, ordination and other issues. Some are quite open about it; others less so. The *National Catholic Reporter* is mostly in the former camp.

In the past few weeks, the *Reporter* has published a slew of articles that in one way or another support abortion rights.

On August 11, it ran a piece titled, "Catholic Discourse on Black Lives Matter Must Amplify Women Founders." Black Lives Matter is an enthusiastic supporter of abortion, despite the fact that a disproportionate number of black babies are aborted.

On August 17, it posted a piece by Sister Simone Campbell, who heads a dissident Catholic group, NETWORK. The "nuns on the bus" leader (only a few were ever along for the ride on her luxury bus) is encouraging Catholics not to vote for President Trump. In her article, she offered a rousing endorsement of Kamala Harris, despite the senator's anti-Catholic track record and her radical support for abortion rights. The good sister believes that abortion should be legal (unlike, for

example, racial discrimination).

On August 18, the *Reporter* published an article on how dissident Catholic groups, which are abortion-rights activists, are urging Catholics to “vote their conscience.” That’s code for rejecting the teachings of the “male hierarchy” (as the author put it), also known as the Magisterium, or the pope in communion with the bishops.

Also on August 18, the media outlet ran a positive article on Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC), the pro-abortion congresswoman from New York. This was its second piece on her. The earlier one, posted on July 27, announced that “AOC is the Future of the Catholic Church.” No one believes this to be true, including the *Reporter*, but it made them feel good to say it. AOC has a 100% NARAL rating, meaning she has never found a pro-abortion bill she couldn’t support.

The August 18 article was different from the others in one way: the author, lesbian activist Jamie Manson (she is a regular columnist), wrote an article called, “AOC Embraces Reproductive Justice, and Other Catholics Should, Too.” This was a full-throated endorsement of abortion.

The editors, however, knowing that there was nothing unequivocal about Manson’s lust for abortion rights, felt compelled to provide an introductory note.

*“NCR does not expect its columnists to share completely the views of our editorial page, and this column is a case in point. NCR has for decades supported a nuanced view of the ‘seamless garment’ approach to abortion and other life issues, as spelled out in this editorial and others over the years.”*

Other than Michael Sean Winters, and possibly one or two more, it is not clear who at the *Reporter* might not be in the abortion-rights camp. No matter, the real issue is why any publication which assumes a Catholic identity would print a column that is flagrantly pro-abortion. It sure wouldn’t

publish an article that belittled climate change.

There is nothing nuanced about abortion: It kills. Trying to fudge a reason to support it—by relabeling it “reproductive justice”—is a sham. But this is where the Catholic Left is these days.

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## **BIDEN IS IN A JAM OVER LINDA SARSOUR**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Joe Biden’s criticism of Linda Sarsour:

Linda Sarsour is one of the most notorious anti-Semites in the nation. A former leader of the Women’s March, she was forced to step down from its board because of her hate speech.

Sarsour not only supports Sharia law, she is a strong advocate of the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement, the organized campaign to economically crush Israel. She recently endorsed Joe Biden.

Yesterday, she spoke at a Democratic National Convention (DNC) council meeting. However, the Biden camp quickly moved to distance him from her. Biden spokesman Andrew Bates told CNN that the Democratic candidate for president “obviously condemns her views and opposes BDS, as does the Democratic platform.”

This defense of Biden does not resolve this issue.

Why was Sarsour invited to participate in a DNC event in the first place? She is not known for anything other than her Jew-bashing. Also, why did Biden share a platform with her as

recently as a few weeks ago? Both of them spoke at a “Million Muslim Votes Summit” (he was in his basement, of course).

If Biden now condemns Sarsour for being pro-BDS, he must also condemn at least three members of “The Squad”: Rep. Ilhan Omar, Rep. Rashida Tlaib, and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC); Rep. Ayanna Pressley has been more careful.

Who did Omar meet with on her first day in Congress in January 2018? Sarsour. In November 2018, Omar’s office issued a statement saying she personally “believes in and supports the BDS movement, and has fought hard to make sure people’s right to support it isn’t criminalized.”

In March 2020, Tlaib, whose anti-Semitism is already legendary, wore a T-shirt of the State of Israel replaced with a Palestinian state. She also proudly displayed a new book written by Sarsour.

During the confirmation hearings for Brett Kavanaugh, Sarsour interrupted the proceedings for the Supreme Court nominee by screaming at him. Who congratulated her? AOC. The New York firebrand then offered a glowing endorsement of Sarsour, tweeting that the anti-Semite is “fighting for everything our flag represents.” The month before the hearings began, Sarsour said AOC is “pro-Palestinian, and she’s unapologetic.” She added, “Alexandria is what represents us and our values.”

Biden is in a jam. It does not matter whether he is aware of the anti-Semitic convictions of Sarsour, Omar, Tlaib, or AOC. What matters is that his handlers are aware of them—they know exactly what they are doing. And that does not bode well for anyone.

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# NEW YORK TIMES OPPOSED WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the anniversary of the suffrage amendment:

It was 100 years ago today that the 19th Amendment was passed, giving women the right to vote. The *New York Times* was not happy about it.

Adolph Ochs created "the family"—a long line of Ochses and Sulzbergers who owned the newspaper—and he was vehemently opposed to the suffragette movement. He reportedly took "great satisfaction" when the suffrage amendment in New York went down to defeat in 1915.

Why did the owner and publisher of the *New York Times* want to deny women the right to vote? He feared it "would make women more like men, take them out of the home, and demean motherhood."

It is certainly true that women's equality has made women more like men, rather than vice versa—they have become just as crude.

Consider that yesterday, Joe Biden would not talk to the media on the first day of the Democratic National Convention, but he did grant an interview to Cardi B, whose new album was labeled by the *New York Times* as "the raunchiest No. 1 single in history"; he could not read her lyrics on the air. Also, caught on a hot mic at last night's Convention, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer "joked" with the crowd, calling them "motherf\*\*\*\*\*." This is what passes as equality these days.

Women have been working out of the home for decades. Are they happier? The results are not encouraging. Prior to the 1980s, surveys showed that women reported being happier than men, but

starting in the 1980s, the happiness gap disappeared. By the 1990s, women were more likely than men to say they were unhappy, a trend that continues today.

That motherhood has been demeaned is incontestable. Ironically, feminists have done the demeaning, lambasting mothers as “breeders.”

Does this mean that Ochs was right to oppose women’s suffrage? No. There are more variables to consider other than the three he cited.

No matter, when we combine Ochs’ opposition to women’s equality with his ancestors’ record of slave ownership, the *New York Times*’ pedigree looks embarrassingly bad. It also undercuts its moral authority to lecture the Catholic Church, or any other institution.

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## **DID HARRIS COVER FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on allegations that Kamala Harris covered up allegations of sexual abuse by priests:

Last week, conservative author Peter Schweizer alleged that when Kamala Harris was the San Francisco District Attorney she failed to pursue allegations of sexual abuse by priests in the San Francisco Archdiocese. He says she did so because she was beholden to Catholic donors to her 2003 campaign; she took over that post in 2004. He also claims she destroyed Church documents.

I admire Schweizer's work and realize that his primary target is Harris, not the Catholic Church. However, his accusations ineluctably tarnish the Church.

The accusations that Schweizer made last week are based on his chapter on Harris in his recent book, *Profiles in Corruption*. I accessed the sources he cited in the book and matched them up with what he said to the media. As it turns out, there are important inconsistencies and omissions. Most important, what he says about the Church's response to law enforcement lacks context, providing the reader with a skewed account.

In an interview with Fox News host Tucker Carlson on August 12, Schweizer said, "Tucker, from 2004 to 2011, she [Harris] was San Francisco Attorney General. She did not prosecute a single case of sexual abuse involving Catholic Church priests."

Schweizer misidentified Harris. She was San Francisco District Attorney from 2004 to 2011; she served as Attorney General of California from 2011 to 2017. But to his most salient point, he is right: she did not prosecute priests.

However, to know if Harris showed favoritism to the Catholic Church, we would need to know if she prosecuted other professionals who interact with minors. For example, did she prosecute public school teachers, or members of the clergy from other religions? This is important because most of the offenses committed by priests occurred in the last century (mostly between 1965 and 1985). In education, the problem is ongoing. If Harris did not pursue teachers, why should she have pursued priests?

Harris' predecessor, Terence Hallinan, was hot on the trail of priests, and was able to secure Church documents on 40 former or current priests. It is true that Hallinan, who lost to Harris in 2003, was building criminal cases. It is also true that in June 2003, six months before Harris took over as D.A.,

the U.S. Supreme Court overturned a California law from 1994 that retroactively eliminated the statute of limitations for crimes involving the sexual abuse of minors.

Instead of asking why Harris did not pursue criminal cases against molesting priests—when the high court said such offenses were time barred—perhaps Schweizer should ask why Hallinan was so aggressive in singling out priests for prosecution, even using a grand jury to bring indictments. He was on a tear, seeking 75 years of Church documents.

Why would a D.A. want to spend his resources seeking to obtain the files on priests extending back to the 1920s? The *San Francisco Chronicle*, not exactly a Catholic-friendly source, labeled Hallinan's pursuit "a fishing expedition." This was noted in several of the sources cited by Schweizer. His failure to mention this suggests he disagrees with the editorial.

Where did Hallinan get the documents on the 40 priests? The archdiocese *voluntarily* turned them over in May 2002. By the way, lay employees were among the 40 (this was not mentioned by Schweizer), and most of the priests were no doubt dead or out of ministry.

There is no question that San Francisco Archbishop William J. Levada was seeking to protect the anonymity of accused priests. In doing so, he was doing what the leaders of every religious and secular institution do in these situations. Do the media open their books to the authorities on sexual abuse allegations? Do school administrators? Does Hollywood? In short, Levada was not an outlier, as Schweizer suggests.

Schweizer told Carlson that "victims groups" were chagrined when Levada was not more forthcoming. In his book, he offers quotes from SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests). Had he been as circumspect about SNAP as he is the Church, he would not have cited this rogue outfit: a few years

ago, SNAP was exposed as a total fraud and as an arch enemy of the Catholic Church. The Catholic League proudly played a major role in bringing about its effective demise.

The fact that former California Governor Jerry Brown, and members of the Getty family, as well as Catholic lawyers, donated to Harris' campaign for District Attorney tells Schweizer that a quid pro quo was operative. He has no proof, of course, but the innuendo is palpable. Moreover, what if foes of the Catholic Church were supporting Hallinan? Why didn't Schweizer probe that issue?

Schweizer is impressed that California Governor Gavin Newsom's father was general counsel for Getty Oil. Newsom is a big supporter, Schweizer says, of Saint Ignatius Prep; Brown attended the elite Catholic school. More innuendo.

Ironically, when Newsom was Mayor of San Francisco, the Catholic League sued the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for passing an anti-Catholic resolution. And last year, Newsom signed a law—aimed at the Catholic Church—that allows for a suspension of the statute of limitations for crimes involving the sexual abuse of minors.

While serving as San Francisco District Attorney, Harris was asked why she would not make public those documents she possessed on priests. Linda Klee, her chief of administration and spokeswoman, told a reporter, "If we did it for you, we would have to do it for everybody. Where do you stop, and where do you start?"

I would go further. Why stop with Church documents? Why not make public every document on everyone who has had an allegation of sexual abuse made against him? The reason no district attorney does, of course, is because it is one thing to make public a conviction, quite another an allegation, and this is especially true of the deceased who cannot defend themselves.

In one of the articles cited by Schweizer, there is a quote from Elliot Beckelman, a former prosecutor in the San Francisco District Attorney's Office who dealt with clergy sexual abuse cases. Schweizer chose not to share it in his book. I will.

Beckelman defends Harris' decision not to release Church documents. "I don't think a district attorney should float that out there if a person can't defend themselves. It's a very serious charge, a sex crime. The Catholics, like other minorities, feel picked upon, and I thought for the integrity of the investigation that we don't have running press conferences to make out that the Catholics are worse than the Jews—which I am—or worse than the Hindus. There's always a balance that comes to sexual assault investigations."

Finally, Schweizer told Carlson that Harris "actually deep-sixed" the documents. That is not what he said in his book. "So what happened to these abuse records? It is unclear."

So are we to believe that in the last six months (his book was published in January), Schweizer now has proof that Harris destroyed the documents? Or is he now hyping his story to make a media splash?

What the Catholic Church did in not making public every accusation made against a member of the clergy in San Francisco was not only legal, it was commendable. If Schweizer can provide evidence that the Church's response was atypical, I would love to see it.

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# NEW YORK TIMES ADDRESSES ST. SERRA ISSUE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on another column on Saint Junípero Serra in the *New York Times*:

On August 6, I wrote a news release about a column by Elizabeth Bruenig in the *New York Times* on the work of Father (now Saint) Junípero Serra, the 18th century Spanish priest who championed the human rights of Indians in North America.

I took her to task for the same reason I took the newspaper to task in 2015: She repeated the same scurrilous accusation that Serra “tortured” the Indians (the initial accusation was made in a news story).

In the August 17 edition of the *New York Times*, Bruenig revisits the Serra controversy. Here is how she opens her piece.

“Last week, a few hours after publishing an essay about American Catholics’ reaction to the Black Lives Matter movement, I received a flood of ill tidings via email. My correspondents’ anger was unrelated to the subject of my article, but was instead inflamed by a mention of Junipero Serra, a canonized Franciscan friar who founded Spanish missions throughout California in the 18th century.”

Bruenig cites the sentence where she accused Serra of torture, but nowhere in her 1754-word article is there even an attempt to disprove what I said. In other words, she provides zero evidence that Serra tortured the Indians. While her piece this time is much more balanced than her initial one, her failure—and the failure of the newspaper—to come to grips with my single complaint is as revealing as it is disturbing.

Father Serra never tortured the Indians. It is a lie. And even

now, the *New York Times* cannot admit it was wrong in 2015 when it first made this charge, and is twice wrong in 2020 for repeating it.

Thanks to all of those who registered their concerns with Bruenig. You are responsible for her second article on Serra.

This time around it would help if you contacted the acting editorial page editor, Kathleen Kingsbury, asking that in the future the paper not reference any accusation that Serra tortured the Indians.

Contact: [editorial@nytimes.com](mailto:editorial@nytimes.com)

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## **SCORING BIDEN AND TRUMP ON RELIGION**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the recent spat over President Trump's criticism of Joe Biden's religious beliefs:

On August 6, President Trump accused Joe Biden of being "against God." When I read this on August 7, I released the following tweet: "Trump has no business smearing Biden's personal faith. What he said is indefensible. He should stick to policy matters, not personal ones."

In a Politico/Morning Consult survey released in June, only 27% of registered voters said they believed Trump to be religious. That should have given Trump pause when he slammed Biden for being "against God." The question for voters, however, is not whether a candidate is personally religious; rather, it is whether his policies are religion-friendly. On

this score, Trump wins hands down.

The Biden camp knows this to be true, which is why they are rolling out his personal faith credentials. It's all they have. Biden's surrogates, such as E.J. Dionne, are praising his devoutness, citing his remark that his faith is the "bedrock foundation of my life." That may be true. It is also true that Biden's lust for abortion rights—he is more extreme now than ever before—has led priests to deny him Communion.

"I think his own faith and values narrative allows us to have inroads into these [faith] communities in ways that Democrats might previously not have been able to do," says John McCarthy of the Biden team. Similarly, John K. White, a Catholic University professor, is impressed that Biden "carries a rosary with him."

Up to a point, symbolic speech matters, but the race for the White House is not a piety parade. If that were the case, there would be few candidates from either party. The race, for the faithful, is about who has the best record defending religious liberty. This is where Biden is in deep trouble. What specific legislation has he sponsored that would advance this end?

It won't do, as some have argued, to say that climate change is a pro-life issue (one that is embraced by Biden). This gambit—trying to jam matters unrelated to traditional life issues into the pro-life portfolio—has not worked in the past, and it is not going to work this time, either. Automobile safety is also a life issue, but no one seriously thinks it is a pro-life issue the way abortion, euthanasia and doctor-assisted suicide are.

Still, Trump's critics say that because his personal life is marred with moral failings, people of faith cannot be taken seriously when they say they will vote for him. This common refrain deserves a serious response.

Let's say that in a presidential race, the Republican candidate is very generous in his charitable giving. He gives to organizations that help needy children, hospitals, and the like. He also has a good record hiring minorities. But his voting record on government assistance to the poor and affirmative action is almost non-existent.

Let's say the Democrat is extraordinarily stingy, giving practically nothing to charity. He also sports a lousy hiring record—his employees are almost exclusively white. But his voting record on government assistance to the poor and affirmative action is excellent.

Would it not be rational for Democrats to vote for the Democrat, in spite of the superior personal record of the Republican?

Al Gore is known to the public as a champion of the poor. But in 1997, the vice president and his wife Tipper contributed a whopping total of \$353 to charity. Their salary was \$197,729. To put it differently, their charitable giving was less than one-tenth the typical contribution for someone with their adjusted gross income.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg is known to the public as a champion of affirmative action. But in 1993, when being considered for a seat on the Supreme Court, she was asked by Sen. Orrin Hatch to explain why, in 13 years as a judge, not one of her 57 law clerks was black. "If you confirm me to this job," she said, "my attractiveness to black candidates is going to improve."

Would it make sense if someone supported government assistance to the poor not to vote for Gore because he is a miser? Would it make sense for someone who supports affirmative action not to support Ginsburg because she is a hypocrite?

Voting involves making tough decisions, weighing all sorts of contrary variables, the conclusion of which is not always neat. But the mature voter will select the candidate who is

best for the nation, notwithstanding his own personal shortcomings. It's the policies that should matter, not the persona.