

Albany Times Union's Hit Job on Catholic Church

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a biased report on the Catholic Church in New York State:

After tracking the Albany Times Union for decades, we know it is more than capable of meeting the highest journalistic standards. However, on February 11 the newspaper ran a piece by Edward McKinley, "New York's Catholic Church Leaders Control Billions Outside the Reach of Abuse Survivors," that is scurrilous.

Like all large-scale organizations, the Catholic Church is constantly distributing and redistributing funds among its various holdings. This is routine. Even McKinley acknowledges there is nothing illegal about such practices. No matter, he is convinced that the Church acted unethically in protecting itself from rapacious lawyers who exploited the Child Victims Act for monetary and ideological gain.

When a reporter does not have the evidence to support his conclusion, he typically resorts to innuendo and conjecture to make his point. McKinley is a master at that genre. Here are some examples.

McKinley is not exactly approving of the decision by the New York State bishops to establish the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation; this is a charitable fund that supports a wide range of important causes. The foundation contributes to Catholic Charities in New York which, in turn, helps provide funding for social justice projects undertaken by the eight dioceses across the state. So what's the problem?

The Mother Cabrini Health Foundation came into existence in 2018 following the bishops' decision to sell Fideles Care, a not-for-profit health insurance program. McKinley suggests

that the selling of Fideles Care and the creation of the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation were a means of avoiding payouts to the victims of abuse.* Does he have proof of something unethical or illegal? No, but that doesn't stop him for implying as such.

What McKinley really objects to is the fact that the bishops made financially prudent moves to ensure the operations of the Church. That's their job. They are not just religious leaders—they are stewards of the Church's financial wellbeing. If the laity are not upset about these decisions, why is it a problem for McKinley?

McKinley gave his hand away when he cited Jeff Anderson as a reliable source. Anderson, who loves to sue the Vatican for allegedly covering up sexual abuse (he has never won), achieved infamy a number of years ago when he declared that his goal in life was to "sue the s*** out of the Catholic Church." For McKinley to give a forum to this Catholic-bashing bigot undermines his own credibility.

McKinley also lambasts the Church for accessing the bankruptcy laws to limit the financial liabilities of dioceses. Does he believe that these laws should only apply to failed newspapers and their corporate owners? His remarks evince a clear bias.

The Times-Union did itself a disservice by publishing this hit job on the Catholic Church. Op-eds are for opinion makers. We expect news stories to offer facts, not opinions.

**We subsequently learned that McKinley erred when he indicated that the Church owned Fidelis and Cabrini. Wrong. This matters because of his contention that monies from these institutions could have been used as settlement funds. That is manifestly inaccurate.*

LARRY FLYNT WAS NO FREE SPEECH HERO

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on media coverage of the death of Larry Flynt:

The Associated Press, USA Today and the Los Angeles Times label porn king Larry Flynt a “free-speech champion.” Reuters, USNews and Yahoo remember him as a “free-speech activist.” They are wrong. Flynt, who died at 78, was no friend of free speech.

Freedom of speech, which is enshrined in the First Amendment, was never meant by the Founders to be an end in itself. It was meant to be a means to an end, the end being the good society. Without robust political speech, where different points of view could be weighed, the prospects of achieving life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness would be diminished. Flynt spent his entire life exploiting free speech, not exercising it.

Madison, who wrote the First Amendment, would not regard Flynt as a free speech hero. He wisely observed that “liberty may be endangered by the abuses of liberty as well as the abuses of power.” Flynt was a master of abusing liberty.

The prospects for the good society are not advanced when naked women are depicted upside down being shoved into a meat grinder. Flynt’s pride and joy, Hustler, opined, “Prime. Last All Meat Issue. Grade ‘A’ Pink.”

Hustler went beyond its porn competitors by offering the most dehumanizing photos imaginable, including botched abortions. The New York Times offers many examples.

Pictures of women being raped and tortured, being subjected to bestiality, nailed to a cross, bagged like a deer and bound to a luggage rack—these were all featured in Hustler. The editors knew what they were doing. Showing women crawling at the end of a leash sent an unmistakable message to sick men. To put on its cover a photo of a woman's head in a gift box is not a demonstration of free speech; rather, it is an example of its perversion.

Flynt was not only the enemy of women—he was the enemy of children. Barely Legal is one of his porn sites that appeals to disturbed men. He even had a character, “Chester the Molester,” who regularly appeared in Hustler cartoons as a pedophile.

What is striking about all the pundits celebrating the free-speech heroics of Flynt is that it is occurring at the same time that his admirers are championing the cancel culture. What they want cancelled is not child pornography: They want to censor political speech, the very heart of the free speech provision in the First Amendment.

The New York Times ran a column this week by Nicholas Kristof titled, “Can We Put Fox News on Trial With Trump?” Similarly, it published a news story, “How Right-Wing Radio Stoked Anger Before the Capitol Riot.” No one beats Max Boot at the Washington Post. His article, “Sadly, Fox News Can't Be Impeached,” is a clarion call for censorship.

Here's the bottom line. According to the conventional wisdom, as outlined by today's deep thinkers, a free society should not tolerate Rush Limbaugh but it should celebrate Larry Flynt. That is about as good a measure there is to prove how morally debased we have become.

THAI CATHOLIC ICE DETAINEE RETURNS HOME

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the status of Pornchai Moontri, the ex-convict whose plight, [as we previously noted](#), is jarring:

Pornchai Moontri is finally back in his home country of Thailand. In December, we asked our email subscribers to sign a White House petition requesting that he be released from the custody of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Our supporters responded with vigor and we quickly learned that the Thailand embassy was contacted by ICE indicating that his case was being taken seriously.

Then came the delays. Due to bureaucratic bungling, Pornchai did not arrive in Bangkok until February 9.

Father Gordon MacRae, a victim of judicial injustice, got to know Pornchai in a New Hampshire prison. They became friends and Pornchai even converted to Catholicism.

Father MacRae was kind enough to mention the [Catholic League's role](#) in helping to expedite Pornchai's case. But he is the real hero.

Beyondthesestonewalls.com is where Father MacRae posts his work. Please check it out. Had it not been for his determination, Pornchai's fate would have been quite different.

Thanks to everyone who supported us in this effort.

DEMONIZING WHITE CHRISTIANS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on attempts to marginalize white Christians:

Much to the chagrin of the Christian left, they have never been able to gain traction. This accounts, at least in part, for their animus against conservative Christians, who, unlike those on the left, carry significant political and cultural weight. The most recent manifestation of the Christian left's hostility to conservative Christians is their invention of Christian nationalism.

It always helps to have a bogeyman. Christian nationalism was not discovered—it was created out of used cloth. Formerly known as the “Religious Right” or “Christocrats,” today's bad guys are different in that they evince a strong racist edge. White people are the problem. To be more specific, it is white conservative Christians, many of whom are Trump supporters, who are an existential threat to our democracy.

Who believes this nonsense? Americans United for Separation of Church and State believes it. It blamed Christian nationalists for the Capitol riot of January 6. So did several True Believers in Christian nationalism, including professor Andrew Whitehead, one of the more prominent exponents of this fiction.

Christianity Today columnist Tish Harrison Warren is also on board. The violence, she said, can be “laid at the feet of the white American church.” The “white American church?” Who speaks this way? Is there an “Asian American church?” Or a “people of color American church?”

David French is a white evangelical critic of Christian nationalism, but unlike most of these partisans, he hasn't gone off the deep end. For example, he doesn't seem to know what the “white American church” is anymore than the rest of

us. "It is rare to find an outright Christian nationalist church. There's not a huge wave of Christian nationalist churches."

This seems odd. If we can't locate where the bogeyman hangs out, isn't it possible he doesn't exist? After all, communists were reliably found hanging out at the offices of the Communist Party. Why can't anyone locate the address of Christian nationalists? Whitehead suggests that's because they're everywhere. "Christian nationalism is pervasive across all segments of U.S. society," he says. Still, it doesn't make sense that no one can find their headquarters.

Paul D. Miller was featured last month in an interview he gave to Christianity Today on this subject. He is a professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service; he is also finishing a book on Christian nationalism. Those are impressive credentials. Too bad he can't get his facts straight.

Miller cites a book by Whitehead and Samuel Perry on Christian nationalism, "Taking America Back for God." They contend the country is split between advocates and detractors of Christian nationalism. They call the most rabid advocates of Christian nationalism "ambassadors," saying they make up 19.8% of the population. In his interview, Miller said the authors contend that "52% of all Americans are what they call ambassador."

How could Miller screw this up? It's not hard to figure out. In his enthusiasm to show how omnipresent the bogeymen are, he conflated the ambassadors with the "accommodators," the less rabid supporters of Christian nationalism; they constitute 32.1% of the public. That's how Miller concluded that the majority of Americans are radical Christian nationalists.

If someone believes that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are divinely inspired, does that make him a Christian nationalist? Whitehead and Perry say it does. Miller

goes so far as to say “that put[s] you high up on the scale of Christian nationalism.”

That would seem to make Thomas Jefferson, not exactly a practicing Christian, a Christian nationalist. The author of the Declaration made four references to God in our founding document. He spoke of “the laws of nature and nature’s God”; “the Creator”; “the supreme judge of the world”; and “the protection of Divine Providence.” And, of course, he said our inalienable rights come from our “Creator,” not government.

Was the U.S. Supreme Court giving voice to Christian nationalism in 1892 when it declared, “This is a Christian nation”? Or was it simply making an historical observation? No matter, to advocates of the cancel culture, such a remark needs to be excised.

Are those who sing patriotic songs Christian nationalists? What about those who display the American flag? Or how about those who say the Pledge of Allegiance? Miller says all three are examples of Christian nationalism. He just indicted most Americans.

What about left-wing Christians who pledge their allegiance to the poor? Are they Christian nationalists? No, insists Miller. What about Christians who are pro-life or who defend religious liberty? According to Miller, they are true Christian nationalists.

Looks like David French is a Christian nationalist after all. The mild-mannered critic of Christian nationalism maintains, “I haven’t changed my perspective on things like being pro-life or believing in strong religious freedom protections.”

Miller was asked what pastors can do to help stop Christian nationalism. His answer was precious. They can ask the faithful, “How much time are you spending a day listening to Fox News and talk radio?”

Who knew that Rush was the real bogeyman all along?

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RESISTANCE TO POPE'S PLEAS GROWING IN U.S.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on two important statements made by Pope Francis:

There is nothing new about the Catholic Church's opposition to abortion or human trafficking, but what Pope Francis said about them on February 8 is worth a closer look.

The pope decried the fact that many nations are retreating on these key life issues. What he said bears application to the vector of change apparent in the United States.

The pope said "it was painful" to observe that "under the pretext of guaranteeing presumed subjective rights, a growing number of legal systems in our world seem to be moving away from their inalienable duty to protect human life at every one of its phases." Calling the right to life "a foundational human right," the Holy Father said, "If we deprive the weakest among us of the right to life, how can we effectively guarantee respect for every other right?"

Among those other rights, he noted in a separate forum, is the right to be free from exploitation. He pointedly mentioned the plight of those who suffer from human trafficking, the most vulnerable among us. He encouraged all of us to continue "praying and fighting together" in hopes of ridding ourselves

of this horrendous condition.

Unfortunately, in the United States we are going backwards on both issues.

President Biden is determined to be the most pro-abortion president in American history. He spent his first few weeks in office rolling back many restrictions on abortion enacted by the Trump administration. Moreover, never has Biden, or anyone on his staff, called the right to life “a foundational human right.”

Just as disturbing are the Biden administration’s policies governing border security. Let’s be honest: He is bent on relaxing the strictures that worked to stop the caravans of Central Americans from crashing our borders. Now they are back. Who is leading them? Human traffickers. They traffic in women, children and drugs.

Biden professes to be a “devout” Catholic, and it would be unfair to question his personal relationship with God. But he can be judged on his abortion policies, and on that score he fails miserably. As for human trafficking, no one champions its cause. But that matters little. What matters is whether the policies being promoted act as a deterrent or a lure.

Pope Francis has a right to expect more fidelity to his teachings from those who wear their Catholicism on their sleeve than from those who do not. And he certainly should expect more from them than those who are not Catholic.

AP UPSET THAT CATHOLIC CHURCH GOT PPP FUNDS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an article by the Associated Press on the Catholic Church's participation in the Payroll Protection Program:

Nancy Pelosi's husband, who has a net worth of \$120 million, co-owns a company that received a Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan; he and his wife are worth \$202 million. The Los Angeles Lakers, which are worth \$4.4 billion, received PPP funding as well; they gave back the \$4.6 million loan after being publicly embarrassed. Lucrative Hollywood law firms also raked in PPP funds.

None of this is of any interest to the Associated Press (AP). On February 4, it continued its obsession with the Catholic Church by running a lengthy piece on this subject (it ran another barn burner in July on the same subject).

What exactly did AP find that upset it so much? It learned that 112 Catholic dioceses collected \$1.5 billion in PPP loans; it estimates that if all the dioceses shared their financial statements the figure would be about double that amount. It contends that given the resources of the Catholic Church in the United States, this money was too generous.

Of course, the case could be made that the money was not generous enough.

Due to restrictions on church attendance occasioned by the coronavirus pandemic, donations to parishes have taken a serious hit. Catholic schools have been especially hit hard—over a hundred have closed—as many parents have found it difficult to pay tuition expenses. Moreover, many of those who work for the dioceses have had to be laid off, and wage cuts had to be made for others. AP makes brief mention of these

hardships but still insists that the Church received too much money.

AP claims that the Catholic Church is sitting on \$10 billion in total assets. How does it come up with such a figure? It estimates real estate properties owned by the Church, as well as funds held by charitable foundations. It also includes "funding that dioceses had opted to designate for special purposes instead of general expenses; excess cash that parishes and their affiliates deposit with their diocese's savings and loan; and lines of credit dioceses typically have with outside banks."

It is striking to note that AP did not do the same computation for other religions. The reason we don't know ballpark estimates of the total holdings of Protestant churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and other religious institutions is because the AP has no interest in conducting such a probe. It is singularly focused on the Catholic Church.

Did the Church need the PPP funds? Not according to AP. How does it know? It quotes Fr. James Connell, a retired administrator who worked in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. "Was it want or need?" Connell said. "Need must be present, not simply want." If that isn't lame enough, consider who Connell is.

He is a long-time Church dissident who co-founded Catholic Whistleblowers in 2013, a tiny group of malcontents that sought to out priests who abused minors. Perversely, Connell was charged several years earlier with covering up for the worst American molester in the history of the Catholic Church, Fr. Lawrence Murphy. Yet AP considers him to be a trusted source.

AP never bothers to tell its readers that the Catholic Church is the nation's largest non-government supplier of social services. The Church serves millions of people in need, many

of whom are not Catholic. It operates schools, hospitals, foster care agencies, homeless shelters, orphanages and the like, never turning away anyone for lack of funds. An honest article on the Church's PPP loans would dig deep into this story.

Last July, AP ran its first story on this issue. Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, made an interesting observation at that time that is relevant to AP's latest story. "Nationally," he wrote, "the Small Business Administration [SBA] approved over 88,000 loans to religious organizations, supporting more than 1 million jobs. Why then focus solely on the Catholic Church, unless the reporters had some animus towards the Church (which we suspect they do)?"

It is not as though AP could not find data on other religions. The Detroit Free Press published a story on July 10, 2020—the same day the initial AP story ran—that was rich with evidence.

"Michigan Churches, Synagogues, Mosques Get Millions in Federal PPP Loans" detailed exactly how much various religious organizations received. Unlike AP's story, it never tried to tar the Catholic Church. This begs the question: If this local paper had access to data on other religions, why did AP choose not to report it?

Under the Trump administration, houses of worship hit hard with Covid-19 were treated by the SBA the same way secular institutions were. It is this policy of non-discrimination that bothers AP the most. Lest we forget, the SBA's PPP was included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. It was unanimously passed in the Senate and was approved via a voice vote, without opposition, in the House.

AP is no longer the respected national wire service it once was. No wonder the majority of the American people no longer trust the media.

Contact Sally Stapleton, global religious editor:

CHARLESTON CATHOLIC SCHOOL SMEARED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a slanted media story about a Catholic school in South Carolina:

After an employee at the largest Catholic high school in South Carolina was arrested two years ago on voyeurism charges—he was caught videotaping two male students in a locker room—school officials immediately contacted the police and fired him. This would ordinarily be the end of the story. But we don't live in ordinary times.

On February 3rd, Larry Richter filed a class-action lawsuit against Bishop England High School and the Diocese of Charleston. He is a steeple-chasing lawyer known for suing the Catholic Church. His belated lawsuit charges that school officials and the diocese intentionally installed windows that overlooked the locker rooms so the staff could watch the students undress.

The accusation is scurrilous.

When the school was built in 1998, small windows were intentionally installed between the athletic coaches' offices and the boys' and girls' locker room. They were installed not for the purpose of satisfying the urges of Peeping Toms, but for safety reasons.

According to a statement released by the Diocese of Charleston, "Their purpose was to allow coaches to monitor for

fights, bullying, smoking or any type of inappropriate activity that might occur within the locker rooms. The plaintiff's claim that the windows were installed for the sole purpose of exploiting students is simply ludicrous."

If Richter were right, why weren't their scores of complaints about employees who took advantage of this situation to spy on students? Why did it take one homosexual employee—21 years after the windows were installed—to take a video on an electronic device of boys in the locker room? He said he "liked younger guys."

So one sicko employee abuses a well-intentioned policy and now all of sudden the school and the diocese are charged with exploiting students for over two decades. Only a fool or an anti-Catholic bigot would believe such nonsense.

Shame on "The State," a daily newspaper in Columbia, South Carolina, for offering such a one-sided story on this issue. It published two articles on what happened, and in its second installment it devoted exactly two of thirty-four paragraphs to the Catholic side. It does a disservice to readers by putting Catholic officials in the worst possible light. The real culprit here is Richter, not the school or the diocese.

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TWITTER UNLOCKS CATHOLIC MEDIA ACCOUNT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on another Catholic League victory:

We learned today that Twitter restored the account of Catholic World Report (CWR), a prominent Catholic media outlet.

Last week, Twitter labeled as “hateful” CWR’s reference to a “biological male identifying as a transgender woman”; the article mentioned that a man who “transgendered” to a woman was about to be nominated by President Joe Biden to a senior healthcare position. After Twitter froze the account of CWR, the publication appealed. It lost.

On January 29, we asked our email subscribers to contact the key person at Twitter who handles these matters. That was roughly around 1:00 p.m. Three hours later, after being pounded by our supporters, Twitter notified CWR that its account was being unlocked.

Once again, we want to thank everyone who made this happen. There is no lay Catholic organization in the nation that fights as hard as we do to combat anti-Catholicism. Indeed, we stand alone.

NO. DAKOTA BILL TO BUST CONFESSIOANAL WITHDRAWN

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a victory for the Catholic League:

Once again state lawmakers attempted to bust the seal of the Confessional, and once again they withdrew their bill under pressure from the Catholic League. Two years ago it was California lawmakers who tried to violate our sacramental right. Last year it was Utah. This year it was North Dakota.

Bill co-sponsor Sen. Judy Lee asked that the North Dakota bill be withdrawn. Inforum, a media outlet that covers the Fargo-Moorhead area, took note of the role of the Catholic League. "In a Jan. 20 letter, William Donohue, president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, said that legislation to break the seal of the confessional was a 'direct assault on our faith.'" To read my letter, click [here](#).

Grand Forks Herald also cited our campaign. We enlisted the support of our email base of supporters and they contacted Sen. Lee asking her to pull her bill. We also contacted all North Dakota lawmakers; we heard positive feedback from some of them.

There is no evidence that victims of sexual abuse are being ignored by lawmakers because of the Catholic sacrament of Reconciliation. Ergo, bills that target the confessional are not only unconstitutional—a clear violation of the free exercise of religion encoded in the First Amendment—they do nothing to bring justice to minors who have been abused.

We commend Sen. Lee for withdrawing the bill she co-sponsored.

CATHOLIC SCHOOL FALSELY ACCUSED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a bogus story about a Catholic school in Oklahoma:

Maggie Baska was named a reporter for PinkNews, a gay media outlet from the UK, on January 27, 2021. She no sooner was hired when she proved to be a total incompetent, falsely accusing a Catholic school of something it never did.

On that same day, Fox23News reported that an eight-year-old girl had been expelled after she told another student that she had a crush on her. The story was accurate. The school was Rejoice Christian School in Owasso, Oklahoma. Two days later CNN ran a column on this news story. It, too, was accurate.

On February 1, an article on this story was posted on the website of pinknews.co.uk by Maggie Baska. The headline read, "Eight-Year-Old Expelled from Catholic School after Telling Another Girl She Had a Crush on Her."

False. Rejoice Christian School is not a Catholic school. The error was not limited to the headline: the story said the girl "was expelled from her Catholic school..." This bogus account has now been picked up by other media sites.

Even a secular reporter should know that Catholic schools typically identify as Catholic, not "Christian." That should have been the first clue that something was wrong.

PinkNews labels itself "the brand for the global LGBT+ community and the next generation. Our mission is to inform, inspire change and empower people to be themselves." How about just getting news stories right?

PinkNews needs to correct its story.

Contact: news@pinknews.co.uk