

COURTROOM BIGOTRY EXPLODES: MICHIGAN GRIEVANCE FILED

On March 3, the Catholic League filed a formal complaint with the Michigan Attorney Grievance Commission regarding anti-Catholic comments made by defense attorney Henry Scharg.

In a Wayne County Circuit Court hearing concerning a woman charged with smothering her newborn daughter to death, her attorney, Henry Scharg, sought repeatedly to malign trial judge Dan Ryan, accusing him of allowing his Catholic religion to color his judgment in the case. Not only did Scharg call into question Ryan's affiliation with Ave Maria Law School, he sought to remove the judge from the case.

What happened on March 1 was unbelievable. Scharg was angered over the fact that Ryan was taking vacation time to teach at Ave Maria on Mondays (the fact that Ryan rearranged his Monday schedule to accommodate Scharg undercut his complaint). In any event, on p. 10 of the transcript from the hearing, Scharg is quoted as saying, "This is the equivalent to an African-American man being on trial and the judge taking Mondays off to attend Klan meetings."

Bill Donohue issued the following statement to the media: "Scharg has no business representing anyone. To compare an accredited Catholic law school to a racist terrorist organization is more than despicable—it constitutes rank anti-Catholic bigotry. Indeed, this remark is so egregious as to warrant severe punitive sanctions, if not disbarment. We will do what we can to see that justice is done."

Justice, we decided, could only be served by lodging a complaint with the Attorney Grievance Commission of the State of Michigan. It is not the Catholic League's role to determine, or even recommend, a suitable punishment. All we

can do is formally ask for an investigation of this matter, which we did.

What angered us as much as anything was the attempt by Scharg to force the removal of the judge. Judge Ryan, of course, did nothing wrong. Scharg was the one who discredited himself before the court with his flagrant anti-Catholic bigotry. When we went to press, there were no reported bigoted outbursts by Scharg in the courtroom. At the very least, we hope our complaint had a chastening effect on him.

Someone on our side gave us a tip about this incident. We are happy he did. But we are not happy with the silence of the Michigan media. Had an anti-Semitic or racist remark been made in court, it's a sure bet it would have been covered. Nonetheless, if justice is to be served—and it could take six months—it will come from the government, not the media.

MUSLIM MASSACRE

Muslim violence against Christians in Nigeria exploded in March. According to one newspaper, “dozens of bodies lined the streets” of three Christian villages in northern Nigeria. “Other victims of the weekend’s Muslim fury jammed a local morgue, the limbs of slaughtered children tangled in a grotesque mess.”

Children were scalped and “officials estimate that 500 people were massacred in night-time raids by rampaging Muslim gangs.” According to one eyewitness account, homes were set on fire and many were decapitated.

We weren't happy with the way many in the media covered this story. For example, CNN accurately reported on the violence, but hastened to add that "analysts say it would be wrong to assume the conflict was rooted in religion." Of course: When Muslims massacre Christians, religion never has anything to do with it.

"Some analysts," the story continued, "believe the weekend slaughter was a revenge attack for the killing of around 150 members" of a Muslim community by Christian mobs. But as we pointed out, after a truce was made, it was Muslim youths, armed with machetes, who broke it.

CNN also cited an ugly incident in 2001 in the same area. What started the Muslim massacre back then? "A Christian woman had tried to cross the road through a group of Muslims during Friday prayers." That an innocent Christian woman should be murdered by Muslims in prayer should be enough to convince even the biggest skeptic that there is something really sick going on.

FATHER RICK: HAITIAN HERO

Mother Teresa never sought fame—she was content to simply care for the sick and indigent without notice or fanfare. While she was unique in many ways, she was not the first, or the last, of great Catholic heroes who are blessed with incredible humility. Father Richard Frechette is cut from the same cloth: he services the dead and dying without a trace of hubris. His venue is Haiti, one of the most tragic places on earth. And that was before the earthquake.

I never heard of Father Frechette before Irving Louis Horowitz told me about him in February (Irv is the publisher who jump-started my career at Transaction books). Father Rick, as he is called, is a Passionist who doubles as a doctor, and Irv is responsible for bringing out his new book, *Haiti: The God of Tough Places, the Lord of Burnt Men*. It is a riveting volume that requires a strong stomach. But the rewards, especially for Catholics, make the struggle worthwhile.

Father Rick has lived in Haiti for 22 years (he hails from Connecticut) and is the founder and director of Nuestrros Pequenos Hermanos ("Our Little Brothers and Sisters"). He also runs Haiti's only free pediatric hospital, St. Damien's. When Matt Labash, a senior writer for *The Weekly Standard* sought to do an article on Father Rick well over a year ago, the priest-physician balked. Just like Mother Teresa, he wanted no publicity. But just like the saintly nun, it is our good fortune that he (like her) was overruled.

On Thursdays, he likes to avail himself of Marlboro's and rum. Father Rick's intake is not driven by vice; rather, it is occasioned by the need to cope with the stench of burnt bodies. To be specific, Thursdays mark his weekly morgue run, the day he blesses the bodies and comforts the family and friends of the deceased. Without the smokes, and a little libation, the smell of the corpses would simply overwhelm him. But just as he never misses saying daily Mass at 7:00 a.m., he never misses his weekly obligation.

Haiti is a nation long riddled with massive exploitation, abject poverty, kidnapping, gangs and unrelenting violence. So what's in it for Father Rick? The same prize that drove Mother Teresa.

The Albanian nun was once asked how she could live and work among lepers. Her answer was telling. "I try to give to the poor people for love what the rich could get for money. No, I wouldn't touch a leper for a thousand pounds; yet, I willingly

cure him for the love of God.” That’s what motivates Father Rick as well—God’s love.

What also energizes him is the Haitian people—they never give up. Surrounded by horror stories, many of which are their own, they possess a will to live that would astound most of us in the developed nations.

“The idea of assisted suicide, or of determining who should be helped to live and who should be left to die, are hot and controversial topics in our world today,” he writes. Then he lowers the boom. “It is just that I have not yet come across someone who said to me, ‘Thanks for offering help, but I really would just rather die.’” His closer finishes the conversation. “I am waiting for such a moment, and its accompanying wisdom.”

It is fascinating to ponder. Why are so many self-identified champions of compassion in North America and Europe obsessed with promoting doctor-assisted suicide, while the indigents from Haiti just want to live one more day? The idea that life is valued more highly by the wretched than the wealthy, and by the ignorant than the intellectual, seems counterintuitive by most standards. But then again the “deep thinkers” have often seen the poor as constituting nothing more than the miserable masses, not realizing how the least among us still find room for joy and a reason for living.

Surely the assisted-suicide enthusiasts could not make heads or tails of those who rallied around Joseph. Father Rick never met him, but he did risk his life trying to find his dead body. Joseph was an American college graduate who worked at a mission hospital trying to eradicate a terrible mosquito-borne disease. He was murdered in the most murderous section of Port-au-Prince, his body left to die rotting in a car. No one from the police or United Nations would agree to his wife’s wishes to go into the area to find him. Father Rick tried, but failed.

Why would Cathy, married to Joseph for only a year, want his rat-eaten body? Because she wanted a Christian burial. Those who joined the search for his body were men and women plagued with tuberculosis and AIDS. That none of them knew Joseph made their heroism all the more remarkable.

Father Rick reflected on what happened. "In the face of the arrogant and horrible display of hell, there appears a powerful force of good capable of defying it, and often this goodness is in a seemingly very feeble form. That force of goodness has made its home in you and I." Spoken like a true priest.

I will write more about this inspiring story in the next issue of *Catalyst*. How Father Rick ties his experiences to Catholic teachings is compelling.

D. C. ARCHDIOCESE REACTS TO GAY MARRIAGE

Starting on March 2, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington no longer extended health benefits to spouses of new employees and to the spouses of current employees not already receiving those benefits. Catholic Charities had to halt spousal health benefits lest it be sued for discriminating against homosexuals who were considered to be married in the District; a bill legalizing gay marriage had recently passed in the District. This decision by the Washington Archdiocese was driven by the marriage inequity activists who will brook no dissent in their crusade to ram their gay-marriage agenda down the throats of the faithful. They know full well that no Catholic entity would prostitute its own teachings merely to do business with the government. Nature, not the Catholic Church, was the first to

ordain that it is biologically incongruous for a man and a man to conceive a child. That ability is wholly the reserve of a man and a woman, and no amount of social and legal fictions can alter it. This issue isn't about equality, it is about creating an inequitable condition—allowing people of the same sex the same rights afforded men and women—that will only disable the institution of marriage in the long run.

Not only did the Archdiocese of Washington have to restrict health care benefits, but it had to cut its foster-care program as well. At issue was the right of the archdiocese to reject gay marriage and remain a city contractor.

Archbishop Donald Wuerl is a man of principle and prudence: he did not want to end the foster-care program, but he was left with no realistic option. District lawmakers could have granted the kind of religious exemptions that would have ensured a continuation of services, but instead they sought to create a Catch-22 situation for the archdiocese. Surely they knew that Archbishop Wuerl was not going to negotiate Catholic Church teachings on marriage, yet that hardly mattered to them. The real losers are the children who were served by the Catholic Church.

Those who said that Wuerl was throwing the kids overboard are phonies. If Planned Parenthood were told that as a condition of public funding it had to refer Catholic women having second thoughts about abortion to a crisis pregnancy center, it would scream violation of church and state, refuse the money and end this program. Well, Archbishop Wuerl wasn't about to allow the state to run roughshod over the doctrine of the Catholic Church, and that is why he was forced to drop the foster-care program.

Prudent lawmakers interested in balancing church and state interests and servicing children would not seek to impose secular views on sectarian institutions. But that's not what D.C. legislators opted to do, leaving Archbishop Wuerl with no realistic alternative.

IS GLENN BECK ANTI-CHRISTIAN?

Recently a major flap started over a comment that radio and television personality Glenn Beck made saying that people should leave their church if it is promoting “social justice.”

Glenn Beck was slammed for days because of his flip remark, and some even accused him of being anti-Christian. In order to get a good read on what he meant, one should examine exactly what he said.

Beck said that “social justice” and “economic justice” are “code words.” Of course they are: they are code for economic redistribution. “Pro-life” is also a code word—it means anti-abortion.

For the record, the Catholic Church embraces both a social justice and pro-life position. It is pro-union, believes in universal health care, promotes a “preferential option for the poor,” and is opposed to abortion, assisted suicide and embryonic stem cell research.

There was no shortage of people who hammered Beck for saying, “Am I advising people to leave their church? Yes!” A closer read of what he actually said shows he closed his statement by saying, “If I am going to Jeremiah Wright’s church. If you have a priest that is pushing social justice, go find another parish.”

Beck didn’t say that Christians should abandon their religion and those who misappropriated his comments are disingenuous. He recommended shopping around to find a more conservative parish if one is dissatisfied with constantly hearing left-wing sermons. Nothing new about that.

In the Catholic Church, there are priests who are stridently left-wing and stridently right-wing; many parishioners shop accordingly. Protestants shop by leaving one denomination for another. And so on.

Some of those who have criticized Beck have done so in a sincere way. Most of them are just phonies.

Just the day before we addressed the Beck situation, we dealt with an issue which was far more serious than his sarcastic remark—we called out a radical feminist leader for branding pro-life Catholic congressman Bart Stupak “un-American.” And the day before that we protested news stories accusing the bishops of “polluting” the health care debate. But we heard nothing from the social justice crowd about these matters. Wonder why.

TONY PERKINS CENSORED AT AIR FORCE BASE

Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, was recently scheduled to speak at a National Prayer Luncheon at Andrews Air Force Base, but the invitation was withdrawn by the chaplain’s office. Why? Because Perkins has spoken out in favor of the military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy.

The decision to silence Tony Perkins, an ordained minister and Marine veteran, represented political correctness at a dangerous level. There are legitimate reasons to accept and reject the current policy regarding gays in the military. No one, therefore, should be censored from speaking at any private or public forum—much less a military installation—because of his or her views on this subject.

While the most immediate issue is the blacklisting of Perkins, the larger issue is the “chilling effect” this decision will have on the free speech and religious liberty rights of all those who serve in the military, especially clergymen.

As a religious leader, and as a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, Bill Donohue told the media that he was “doubly troubled by this outrageous decision.”

Accordingly, we called for an investigation of this matter. The damage to Perkins cannot be undone, but steps can certainly be taken to ensure that something like this never happens again. We contacted Major General Darrell D. Jones, Commander of the Air Force District of Washington at Andrews Air Force Base, and asked for a probe into this matter.

We implored our members to make sure that the Public Affairs Office at Andrews heard from them about this very disturbing issue.

“DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL” ALARMS THE FAITHFUL

Recently we explained to the media why it is necessary for those reviewing the military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy to study the free speech and religious liberty implications of repealing it.

Discussions abounded during the week after Andrews Air Force Base withdrew the invitation to Tony Perkins from speaking at a National Prayer Luncheon. Those conversations left us convinced that much more was at stake than just the Perkins travesty.

At issue are the legitimate concerns of many Catholic and Protestant communities: What will happen to the free speech and religious liberty rights of those who serve in the military, especially the clergy, if "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is repealed?

We contacted the Senate Armed Services Committee asking for a review of the impact that a repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" might have on these First Amendment rights. We also contacted those in charge of leading the assessment of gays in the military, namely, Jeh Johnson, general counsel for the Department of Defense, and Gen. Carter Ham, commander of the U.S. Army Forces in Europe.

What we need to know is obvious. If Perkins, who is a civilian, was punished for supporting the existing policy, God only knows what will happen to those in uniform if they voice disapproval of a new policy. Until this constitutional issue is resolved, further review of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" should be put on ice.

JESUS-TOMB HOAX EXPOSED AGAIN

During Lent of 2007, movie director James Cameron released a documentary on the Discovery Channel claiming to have evidence of a Jerusalem tomb that allegedly houses the remains of Jesus and his family. Working with Cameron was Dr. Charles Pellegrino, who co-authored a book on the subject with Simcha Jacobovici, *The Jesus Family Tomb: The Discovery, the Investigation, and the Evidence That Could Change History*. Bill Donohue debated Cameron and Jacobovici on "Larry King Live" and confronted Pellegrino on the "Today Show." He argued that the entire story was a "Titanic Fraud."

News reports recently confirmed that Henry Holt & Company has halted printing of *The Last Train from Hiroshima* by Pellegrino. The publisher stated that one of the key sources the author relied on was a fraud (not disputed by Pellegrino). Also questioned was the existence of two priests mentioned in the book (the author conceded that there is no such person as Father John MacQuitty, but that a pseudonym was used which he “forgot to disclose in the book’s acknowledgments”). Finally, Victoria University said he was never awarded a Ph.D.

“I knew these guys were blowing smoke,” commented Donohue, “After all, Israeli archaeologists were quick to dismiss their claims, as were professors from the Biblical Archaeology Society.” Here is what Donohue told Pellegrino on the “Today Show” in 2007 about the book he co-authored: “There’s not one citation in the book, there’s not one footnote, there’s not one endnote. Both of us have doctorates. We know the way science proceeds. You go through a peer review or you present your findings in a scientific journal.” Now we know his Ph.D. is a fraud. Just like the entire caper.

The larger issue is why many in the media were so willing to swallow the Jesus-tomb moonshine in the first place. We have a hunch, and it’s unsettling.

DECEPTION AND BIGOTRY MARK HEALTH BILL

Just as we were ready to go to print, the House passed the health care bill. What follows are key events leading up to the vote.

Every time spokesmen for the president were asked about the

Senate health care bill that authorizes federal funds for abortion, they replied that none of the bills put forth are the president's own. Moreover, the president has said on numerous occasions that he would never sign a health care bill that funds abortion.

The issue was settled once and for all when President Obama's own proposal was released. The president's bill, which modified some of the aspects of the Senate bill, made "no changes to the controversial abortion language included in the Senate bill," according to *Newsweek*.

While it is true that the pro-abortion camp was unhappy with the president for not striking some restrictions it deplors, the fact remains that President Obama could have adopted the pro-life friendly language of the House bill. The fact he didn't is what matters most.

Soon after the president announced his proposal, Rep. Bart Stupak—a Michigan Democrat—and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius appeared on "Good Morning America" to discuss abortion funding in the president's health care bill. Stupak maintained that the bill provides for abortion coverage; Sebelius disputed that claim.

On December 8, 2009, CNN reported that "The Senate on Tuesday rejected an amendment to tighten restrictions on federal funding for abortion in the sweeping health care bill it is debating." It added that the amendment "mirrored language in the House bill that prevents any health plan receiving federal subsidies from offering coverage of abortion."

On November 5, 2009, the *New York Times* quoted Harvard Law professor Laurence Tribe who wrote a memorandum analyzing the House bill. He said that the House bill, "as it currently stands, does not authorize governmental funding of abortion."

If the Senate had rejected an amendment that "mirrored language in the House bill," and the House bill "does not

authorize governmental funding of abortion," then it is obvious that Sebelius misled the nation. What's worse is that she willfully did so.

Soon after his appearance on "Good Morning America," Stupak appeared on a Michigan radio show. During the interview he drove home the fact that despite his attempts to retain the status quo and keep abortion funding from the health bill, there are elements—namely Rep. Henry Waxman—in Washington that "want to pay for abortions."

It was bad enough that Obama, Sebelius and others were deceiving the nation, but as the vote neared a whole new dimension was added: anti-Catholicism ran rampant.

NPR ran an article on its website titled, "Powerful Catholic Quietly Shaping Abortion, Health Bill Debate." The piece was about Richard Doerflinger, the pro-life point man for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The undue headline marred the otherwise fair piece.

NPR, however, looked innocent compared to others. Slate.com questioned, "Whither Ecumenism? Catholics Interfere with a Rival Doctrine." *Newsweek* ran a piece entitled, "When Bishops Play Politics: A New Generation Gets Righteous." Examiner.com used the headline "Religion Pollutes, Threatens Health Care Reform via Abortion, Catholic Bishops." And RHRealitycheck.org posted an article beckoning readers to "take a good, hard look at just how the Bishops are cooking it up...Covering-up their real intentions with lofty sentiments about morality and justice while they cook-away, and deal-away, behind closed doors..."

"Jews Interfere." "When Rabbis Play Politics: A New Generation Gets Righteous." "Religion [Judaism] Pollutes." "Rabbis Deal-Away, Behind Closed Doors." Such bigotry would never be published by any of the aforementioned outlets.

Inevitably, Stupak, a Catholic, became the target of much of

the bigotry. Connie Saltonstall, a Michigan activist, decided that she would challenge Stupak in the Democratic primary. Citing his “personal, *religious* views,” she said it is “reprehensible” for him to “deprive his constituents of needed health care reform because of those views.” (Italics added.) Mary Pollock, the legislative vice president of the Michigan chapter of the National Organization for Women, accused Stupak of imposing his religious beliefs on the nation. “It is outrageous and un-American,” Pollock said of the pro-life congressman.

Smear words have been used against virtually every religious, racial and ethnic group in American history. Fortunately, they are rarely voiced anymore. Unfortunately, it is still fair game in many quarters to indict Roman Catholics. One of the most vile canards ever invoked against Catholics is the rap that they are “un-American.” This bigoted slur has its origins in the early part of the 19th century. It is more than disconcerting—it is disgusting—that it is still being made against Catholics in 2010. That it should come from the mouth of a radical feminist activist is not wholly surprising, but it is reprehensible nonetheless.

As the clock continued to wind down on the health care bill, anti-Catholicism raised its ugly head with great frequency. We called on men and women of goodwill and from all faith backgrounds, and on both sides of the abortion issue, to unequivocally denounce these bigoted expressions.

OBAMA AIDES HOST CATHOLIC

BASHERS

On February 26, several officials from the Obama administration met with representatives of the Secular Coalition for America giving people of faith, especially Christians, a good reason to wonder exactly where their interests lie with the Obama administration. It appears that we now have the definitive answer.

In an unprecedented move, leaders of a presidential administration hosted some of the biggest anti-religious zealots in the nation.

No one opposes men and women who are incidentally agnostic or atheist from expressing their concerns, even to the White House. The problem with this meeting was the profile of the coalition's members and organizations. On the advisory board of the Secular Coalition for America are such activists as Robert Boston, Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, Susan Jacoby and Michael Newdow. Member organizations include American Atheists, the American Ethical Union and the Council for Secular Humanism. All of these persons and groups have a track record of open hostility to people of faith, and some have been downright bigoted in their assault on Christianity, especially Catholicism.

According to the Secular Coalition's press release announcing the meeting, three topics were planned for discussion: 1) Protecting Children from Neglect and Abuse; 2) Ending Military Proselytizing; 3) Fixing Faith-Based Initiatives.

If President Obama does not want to go to church, that is his business. But it is the business of the American people, most all of whom are believers, to know where the president and his administration stand with regards to their concerns. It is not likely that this outreach to anti-religious activists—many of whom would crush Christianity if they could—will do anything to calm the fears of people of faith. Indeed, it will only alienate them even further.