

“THE BORGIAS”

Showtime, the pay-per-view sister station of CBS, has decided to gift Christians this Easter season by running a series on “The Borgias”; Bravo will pick it up shortly after it premieres on Showtime. Rodrigo Borgia, who became Pope Alexander VI, was an extortionist who led a life of debauchery, fathering four illegitimate children. That he was a disgrace to the papacy is not in question; rather, the question is why Showtime decided it was worth spending \$45 million to produce.

The series was written by Irish-born atheist Neil Jordan. His previous work includes directing “The Butcher Boy,” which featured Sinead O’Connor playing a foul-mouthed Virgin Mary. The producer, James Flynn, has admitted that the series takes “poetic license” with the historical account, thus assuring us of a sensationalized presentation of an already sensational story.

Given the “poetic license,” it makes us wonder whether Alexander VI will be portrayed as friendly to the Jews, as he was in real life. It also remains to be seen whether there is any mention of Pope Pius II taking him to task: in a scathing letter he wrote to Borgia when he was a cardinal, the pope admonished him to change his ways and start living a “well ordered life.” Regrettably, the pope’s effort was in vain: Borgia continued with his life of profligacy.

ABUSE PROBE NEEDED NATIONWIDE

On March 13, the *New York Times* ran a lengthy front-page story, "At State-Run Homes, Abuse and Impunity," that showed how common it is for state employees servicing the developmentally disabled to abuse residents. Because they are protected by the Civil Service Employees Association, it is almost impossible to fire them. Though it is against the law not to report cases of abuse to the police, "fewer than 5 percent were referred to law enforcement." Moreover, "In 25 percent of the cases involving physical, sexual or psychological abuse, the state employees were transferred to other homes." In many serious cases, the same employee was moved more than once.

The day before, the *New York Daily News* ran a story on "rubber room" teachers in New York City. Hundreds of teachers have been removed from the classroom for misconduct—it is almost impossible to fire them because they are protected by the teachers' unions—and currently there are 83 who have a criminal case pending against them. And as we know from previous stories, moving abusive teachers around from school district to school district is so common in the profession that it is called "passing the trash."

On March 2, the *New York Post* ran a story by Michael Goodwin detailing how approximately 500 teachers "have been convicted of criminal offenses, including assault, sex crimes, kidnapping, burglary, prostitution and lewdness." Goodwin added that "many arbitrators are reluctant to fire teachers for almost any reason."

After being informed on these abuses, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo removed the two top officials of state-run homes, and ordered a probe of the agencies.

Bill Donohue wrote to every governor asking for an

investigation of all public-run agencies and schools. In his letter, Donohue told the governors, "It would not only serve the common good by protecting the developmentally disabled and children, it would render a service to all vulnerable segments of the population."

It is clear that this problem is not unique to New York, and it sure isn't just a problem in the Catholic Church.

BIAS MARKS PHILLY COVERAGE

In February, a Philadelphia grand jury released a report going after the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for sheltering priests accused of sexual abuse. This report followed a grand jury investigation in 2005 which also went after the archdiocese, but came up empty. No other institution was targeted by either grand jury; they simply were focused on the Catholic Church.

Following the release of the most recent grand jury report, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* ran an editorial singling out the archdiocese to make public its files on priests accused of sex abuse and called upon lawmakers to make it easier for past alleged victims to sue. What it failed to mention is that nowhere is there less of a problem of sex abuse than in the Catholic Church. Indeed, in 2009 only 6 credible accusations were made against over 40,000 priests.

Its dishonesty was remarkable. It never called for any other institution to open its files on accused employees.

After a few weeks, there was still the impression that the archdiocese was guilty of sheltering abusive priests which led

to outrageous comments by agenda-driven lawyers, professional victims' groups and pundits. After looking at the facts, it is clear that the Catholic Church never had a monopoly on this problem.

We looked at the numbers and it became clear that the problem in Philadelphia was being overstated.

Beginning in 2003, 61 cases of priestly misconduct were examined by the archdiocese. 24 were dismissed because the accusations could not be substantiated. Of the 37 remaining cases, three priests were suspended immediately following the recent grand jury report and 21 additional priests were suspended. As for the rest, eight were found not to have a credible accusation made against them; one has been on leave for some time; two are incapacitated and no longer in ministry; and two more belong to religious orders outside the archdiocese.

This means the majority of the priests didn't have a single credible accusation made against them (the initial 24 plus the eight newly absolved, or 32 of 61). Moreover, none of the 24 who were suspended had been found guilty of anything. To top things off, the charges against them include such matters as "boundary issues" and "inappropriate behavior," terms so elastic as to indict almost anyone.

Just as it is important not to understate the problem, it is important not to overstate it. Neither the archdiocese, nor the media, has been particularly clear about offering a concise, disaggregated tally. The confusion is complicated because the public assumes that not only are all of these priests guilty, but that they are all guilty of a serious offense.

What got lost in the discussion were the constitutionally protected due process rights of accused priests. The rush to judgment is especially despicable in a day and age when accused Muslims are more likely to be presumed innocent than

accused Catholic priests. And they aren't being detained because of "boundary issues."

SILENCING CONSERVATIVE VOICES

We recently learned that 74 Democrats asked U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas to recuse himself if the health care bill comes before the high court. The reason? His wife supports the Tea Party and it is against the health care law. In February, disciplinary hearings began against former Kansas Attorney General Phill Kline. The reason? He should have recused himself from investigating George Tiller, the infamous late-term abortionist, because he holds pro-life views and was allegedly "obsessed" with Tiller.

If this is the standard for recusal, then U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Ninth Circuit Judge Stephen Reinhardt and New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman need to recuse themselves from all cases involving abortion.

Ginsburg's obsession with abortion is uncontested: she co-founded the Women's Rights Project at the ACLU. Reinhardt is married to Ramona Ripston, who retired last year as the executive director of the Southern California ACLU; she has been obsessed with abortion rights for decades. Schneiderman's father is the former treasurer of NARAL, the most radical pro-abortion organization in the nation; this connection has already led the AG to recuse himself in a case involving Kelli Conlin, the former NARAL New York president. Conlin is accused of ripping off NARAL for meals, a summer rental in the Hamptons, clothes, and more than \$100,000 on car services. Schneiderman should pledge to recuse himself from all future

cases involving abortion.

What's good for the goose, should be good for the gander.

LIBERAL RELIGIONS IN FREE FALL

Following the recent publishing of the findings of the *2011 Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches*, we commented on them.

Beginning with the work of Dean Kelly in the 1970s, it has been empirically obvious that those religions which have experienced the greatest proportionate decline in membership are generally the most progressive or liberal in their teachings; conversely, conservative-oriented religions have fared comparatively well. The latest data from the *Yearbook* proves this to be true again.

Of the major religions, some of the ones that witnessed an uptick in membership are: the Catholic Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Assemblies of God. Those that witnessed a decline of more than two percent are: the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Episcopal Church and the United Church of Christ. Those that declined by more than one percent are: the United Methodist Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the American Baptist Churches U.S.A.

With the exception of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and to some extent the American Baptist Churches, all the other

churches with declining membership hold liberal views on abortion and gay rights. Moreover, the smallest decline among the Baptist churches was registered by the most conservative among them, the Southern Baptist Convention (down .42 percent).

By sharp contrast, all of the religions that experienced a growth in membership are pro-life and pro-marriage (normatively understood). Looks like God is truly looking out for those religions that don't treat Scripture as if it were a post-modern text to be deconstructed by left-wing ideologues.

INVESTIGATE ESQUIRE

The front page of *Esquire* magazine's website recently featured an article by its executive editor, Mark Warren, "Investigate the Vatican," giving new meaning to the word "rant." He began by applauding the *New Yorker* for its critical piece on Scientology, but asked, "Wouldn't the resources and time of journalists be better directed at the finances, earthly corruption, and raw power of the Catholic Church, an institution that wields influence incalculably greater than L. Ron Hubbard's [founder of Scientology] itty-bitty religion?"

He continued, "I mean, I grew up believing that every breath I drew sent a god-made-man named Jesus Christ writhing on the cross to which he had been nailed...so that he might die for my sins so that I might live. And yet, I was born not innocent but complicit in this lynching, incomprehensibly having to apologize and atone for this barbarism for all my days and feel terrible about myself and all mankind." Then, of course, he bashed the pope blaming him for the homosexual scandal.

Only an ex-Catholic would be capable of writing something like this.

Having never heard of this guy, we quickly found out that Warren's hero is poor Christopher Hitchens. Warren spoke of "the dashing Bill Donohue" asking "what on earth have we done to deserve [him]?" Donohue responded, "Much, I would say."

We said the time has come to investigate *Esquire*. You know it's in trouble when it features screeds like this, and when it flags such penetrating articles as, "How to Sew a Button Easily" and "How to Hit a Softball." Now we know why *GQ* has a circulation more than double that of *Esquire's*.

FASCIST ATTACK ON PRO-LIFE BILLBOARD

In February, a pro-life group, Life Always, displayed a huge billboard [see below] in the SoHo section of New York City that shows a picture of a young black girl with the inscription, "The most dangerous place for an African American is in the womb." The billboard, which created a firestorm in the city, was eventually taken down by the billboard company.

The organization responsible for the billboard had the backing of prominent African Americans; they chose to display their message during Black History Month. Rev. Stephen Broden, an African American who heads Life Always, said he wanted to protest abortion as black genocide.

Life Always said it wanted to raise public awareness of Planned Parenthood's war on black people. Margaret Sanger, who

founded the organization, made no secret of her racist agenda to wipe out the “weeds” in the African American community. To this day, a disproportionate number of Planned Parenthood’s abortion clinics are located in minority neighborhoods, their biggest cheerleaders being affluent white liberals who perversely boast of championing the cause of the black poor.

Nationally, blacks, who make up 13 percent of the population, account for over one-third of all the abortions. In New York City, where over four out of ten children are killed before birth, the rate of abortion among black women is 60 percent. But killing six in ten black babies isn’t enough to satisfy some affluent white liberals—they want more.

New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn doesn’t find black genocide offensive but found the billboard offensive. Worse was Bill de Blasio, who as New York’s Public Advocate, advocated that the billboard be taken down. He said, “The billboard simply doesn’t belong in our city. The ad violates the values of New Yorkers.” The values he is so proud of include the devaluing of innocent human life, making New York City the abortion capital of the nation.

After the outcry reached a fever pitch, the billboard company ordered that it be taken down.

It was a perfect exercise in urban fascism: calls for censoring the free speech of a private company were issued by agents of the state; waiters and waitresses who work in a restaurant in the building where the billboard was posted were harassed; and concerns that violence might ensue—as admitted by an official for the ad company—forced the decision to take down the billboard.

It wasn’t long ago that the Catholic League protested a vile video that was part of an art exhibition at the Smithsonian that showed large ants running all over Jesus on the Cross. Because the Smithsonian receives 70 percent of its funding

from the public, and Christians comprise 80 percent of the population, we asked Congress to reconsider the propriety of underwriting this institution. We never called for censoring the video, we never sponsored harassment of Smithsonian employees (there was none anyway), and we never threatened violence. Yet we were the subject of endless condemnation by the liberal-left.

Now, when real calls for censorship take place, along with real acts of harassment, and real concerns over violence, no one is castigated by our critics. It is evident who the real fascists are.

ABORTION INDUSTRY CRACK-UP

The abortion industry is cracking up and is scared to death over the public backlash at Planned Parenthood, and a host of proposed bills at the state and federal level assuring civil rights for the unborn. Consider their incendiary language.

Pro-abortion enthusiast Amanda Marcotte said pro-lifers want to force women back to the “sadistic punishments” of the pre-Roe days. The Feminist Majority accused pro-lifers of “domestic terrorism,” and a writer for religiondispatches.org said “state-endorsed terrorism” is at work. The National Organization for Women outdid everyone by engaging in rank anti-Catholic invective: it said it would be a “dream-come-true” for the bishops if women were to lose access to pap smears and testing for sexually transmitted diseases.

A pro-life billboard was recently taken down in New York City after pro-abortion government officials objected. The same

censors in the New York City Council passed a measure to punish crisis pregnancy centers for offering alternatives to abortion; deceptive advertising was the charge. Bill Donohue wrote to one of the censors, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, asking her to consider legislation that would “require Planned Parenthood to advertise that they are primarily an abortion provider, and not an adoption-referral organization,” pointing out that it performed 324,008 abortions in 2008 as opposed to only 2,405 adoption referrals. He never heard back.

Meanwhile, the *New York Times* recently ran an editorial condemning the crisis pregnancy centers, arguing that women considering an abortion are entitled to make “well-informed decisions about reproductive health.” Why then does it use the term “burdensome” to describe requirements that women considering an abortion first see a sonogram of their baby? Wouldn’t that help her make a “well-informed decision”? The crack-up is profound.

OBAMA REFUSES TO DEFEND MARRIAGE

President Barack Obama’s administration recently decided that it would not to defend the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act, but this was nothing new to us. 15 years ago, while running for the Illinois state Senate, Barack Obama said, “I favor legalizing same-sex marriage, and would fight efforts to prohibit such marriages.”

But when Obama decided to run for the U.S. Senate in 2004, he knew that his support for homosexuals crashing the institution

of marriage was too extreme, so he decided to endorse civil unions. He said at the time, "I think that marriage, in the minds of a lot of voters, has a religious connotation."

In 2008, when Obama was a presidential candidate, he invoked God-talk again to justify his newly crafted defense of marriage: "I believe that marriage is the union between a man and a woman. Now, for me as a Christian...it is also a sacred union. God's in the mix." But he knew this wasn't true when he said it: at the same time Obama was rhetorically espousing a pro-marriage position, he was working to undermine marriage by opposing Proposition 8 in California. That was the 2008 measure that reserved marriage as a union between the only two people who can naturally form a family, namely, a man and a woman.

Now Obama is officially on record as president opposing the defense of marriage. Thus does he pit himself against the 1996 law that was signed by President Bill Clinton, and opposed by only 15 percent in the House and 14 percent in the Senate. He also stands in opposition to the over 30 state initiatives affirming marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

Now that Obama is totally out of the closet, it will spur a genuine effort to adopt a constitutional amendment affirming the integrity of marriage.

ACLU DEFENSE OF MUSLIMS IS

POLITICAL

The ACLU of Southern California and the Los Angeles chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations recently sued the FBI for violating the rights of Muslims by sending an informant to spy on them in a California mosque. The FBI was investigating possible terrorist threats, but the lawsuit claims it was guilty of “indiscriminate surveillance.”

The ACLU is motivated by politics, not principle. In the late 1970s, after Rep. Henry Hyde authored a bill to restrict federal financing of abortions, the ACLU dispatched an agent to spy on him. The agent followed him into a Catholic church on Sundays and took notes of what happened. This was done to show that it was Hyde’s Catholicism that accounted for his pro-life stand.

It is a little too late for the ACLU to feign outrage over FBI agents spying on Muslims in a mosque: it cares not a whit about religious rights, unless they serve a political purpose. That’s why the ACLU is so fond of defending the religious rights of prisoners, but is noticeably silent when it comes to the due process rights of Catholic priests accused of crimes that allegedly happened decades ago.

The FBI has a job to do in tracking down suspected terrorists, and if that warrants surveillance in a house of worship—including a Catholic church—so be it.