

BIGOTRY IN THE CONGRESS; RELIGION IS THE NEW TARGET

Religious bigotry has replaced racial bigotry among congressmen. Both the House and the Senate have shown a spike in religious bigotry, the targets being mostly Catholics and Jews.

A few months ago, two U.S. senators, Kamala Harris and Mazie Hirono, showed their anti-Catholic colors by attacking a Catholic nominee for a job on the federal bench because of his membership in the Knights of Columbus.

Brian Buescher, who was nominated by President Trump to serve on the U.S. District Court for the District of Nebraska, was badgered by these Democrats for belonging to an “all male society,” one that just happens to oppose abortion and gay marriage. It is undeniable that Buescher was attacked because he belongs to a Catholic group.

In January, Bill Donohue contacted the House Ethics Committee asking for sanctions against Rep. Ilhan Omar after she lied about students from Covington Catholic High School. She accused them of making fun of rape—“it’s not rape if you enjoy it”—and for racism (they were accused of taunting five black men). None of this was true, which is why she deleted the remarks from her website. She never apologized, which is what we would expect.

Donohue wrote to Ethics Committee chairman Rep. Ted Duetch and Ranking Member Kenny Marchant asking them to invoke Rule XXIII, Section 1, of the Code of Official Conduct which addresses civility.

More recently, Omar went on a rampage against Jews, accusing them of buying votes and putting the interests of Israel ahead of the U.S. She rolled out the familiar anti-Semitic tropes to

the applause of extremists in the Democratic Party.

When a resolution was introduced in the House calling for a statement condemning anti-Semitism, Rep. Nancy Pelosi, the House Speaker, caved in to Omar and her ilk by diluting the resolution; it condemned virtually every expression of bigotry. We labeled it a “sham.”

This led Rabbi Aryeh Spero of the National Conference of Jewish Affairs, who is a good friend of Donohue’s, to stage a sit-in at Pelosi’s congressional office. We supported it and some Catholic League members participated in it.

Religious bigotry is no more acceptable than racial bigotry. Regrettably, we now have to fight to get this voice heard. The good news is we have some key allies to work with.

LOCKWOOD R.I.P.

Robert P. Lockwood passed away March 4. He was one of the most prolific Catholic journalists of our time, writing columns and books for Our Sunday Visitor for decades. He was also the president of Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, a company he brought to a new level of excellence. His last post was as director of communications for the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Bob served with distinction as a member of the Catholic League’s board of directors for many years. He later served as the league’s director of research and was then named to the league’s board of advisors.

Bill Donohue has many fond memories of Bob. “There was nothing Bob wouldn’t do for the Catholic Church, or the Catholic League. He never turned down an assignment and worked

diligently on every project he undertook.” Indeed, some of his work can be found on the Catholic League’s website.

Lockwood was a native New Yorker who moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana to take command of Our Sunday Visitor. He moved back to Fort Wayne after his job in Pittsburgh.

Donohue recalls him as “an astute writer, editor, and publisher. He was fun to work with, and he loved a new challenge. Gregarious and good humored, he was the kind of person every organization would love to have on staff. He never put his own interests above the best interests of the Catholic League.”

God bless Bob Lockwood. He left us too soon; he was 69.

WHY I WROTE COMMON SENSE CATHOLICISM

William A. Donohue

When I was in the Air Force, in the late 1960s, I became interested in politics. It was a turbulent time, and this was certainly true of California, where I was stationed. My first political leanings, some may be surprised to learn, were liberal-left. That didn’t last long.

When I was discharged, I attended New York University. I quickly became more skeptical of liberalism, seeing in it a utopian vision that didn’t square with reality. I was also dismayed at the hypocrisy and double standards that were evident among the left-wing students and professors whom I encountered.

It was my roots, more blue collar than white, that allowed me to size up the dreamers and the frauds on the Left. Such an upbringing imports a heady dose of common sense.

My grandfather (a retired New York City policeman) and my grandmother, both of whom were born in Ireland, played a major role in raising me. My mother was a nurse who worked nights, so I didn't see much of her until the weekend. My father abandoned my sister and me when we were very young. It was my mother and grandparents who anchored me in Catholicism and common sense, setting the stage for my transition to conservatism.

I spent 20 years in education before becoming president of the Catholic League, four of them in a Catholic elementary school in Spanish Harlem, and sixteen as a professor of sociology and political science at a Catholic college in Pittsburgh (I also did a year at The Heritage Foundation near the end of my college teaching years).

In my new book, I write, "from my years spent as a college professor, I can testify that some of the stupidest people I have ever met teach college." I define stupidity as "a lack of common sense, as in sound judgment." I also write that "it is entirely possible to be well educated yet not possess common sense. This is especially true of intellectuals—*they are more likely to lack common sense.*"

What is it that makes many intellectuals stupid (I hasten to add I am not indicting all of them)? Above all, it is their rejection of nature, and nature's God. And because they get that wrong, they get it all wrong.

The Founders understood human nature, and that is why, despite obvious flaws, America has enjoyed unparalleled freedom and prosperity. That is now imperiled, mostly because of the deep thinkers who reject nature and nature's God. Their stupid ideas are the reigning ideas in education and in our cultural

institutions. They have also found their way into law and public policy.

No institution in society better understands human nature than the Catholic Church. Its teachings are a repository of wisdom. The Church is not at war with nature, or nature's God; on the contrary, it is at home with them.

The contrast between the norms and values of the dominant culture, and those that inhere in Catholicism, shine brightly. This is brought to light when we consider the goals of the French Revolution, namely, freedom, equality, and fraternity. These were, and still are, noble ends, but they were completely obliterated by the intellectuals and the architects of the French Revolution, and they are now imperiled by the contemporary wizards of our day.

The dreamers understand liberty as license; the Church knows better. The blue-sky thinkers envision a world where male-female differences, and the inequalities that mark the economic classes, will be eliminated; the Church knows better. The bookworms do not seek fraternity in tradition and religion—they hate both; the Church knows better.

We live in strange times.

There was a time, not too long ago, when it was illegal to burn the American flag on a courthouse lawn, but it was legal to erect a Nativity scene in the same spot. Now the reverse is true.

When TV bloomed in the 1950s, we never saw the bedroom of Ralph and Alice in "The Honeymooners." Now there is nothing we don't see.

It seems like only yesterday when men who thought they were women, and vice versa, were housed in the asylum. Now they are housed in the university.

Up until just recently, we rewarded those who worked hard. Now college students are told that working hard is a microaggression, a sign of patriarchy that must be eradicated.

Respecting Western civilization was the norm for most of my life. Now the professors want to tear it down.

From the beginning of Hollywood movies, up until at least the 1970s, priests and nuns were portrayed positively. They have since been trashed.

The bottom line is this: Freedom, equality, and fraternity have been distorted by the brainy ones who think they know better. They don't.

The deep thinkers believe human nature and the Almighty are a fiction, and as a result they have created a social and cultural mess. Their own lives, and the ideas they entertain, are a colossal train wreck.

Common Sense Catholicism is the only cure for the stupidity that these geniuses have bequeathed. Hope you enjoy the book.

THE RIGHT TONIC: COMMON SENSE CATHOLICISM

Russell Shaw

Bill Donohue, *Common Sense Catholicism: How to Resolve Our Cultural Crisis* (Ignatius Press)

Imagine that dueling has been legalized in America. Imagine that two men decide to settle their differences by fighting a duel. What then? Bill Donohue points to some of the questions

that then might very well be raised: "What if an arena agrees to host the event? What if a pay-for-view cable channel agrees to air the contest live? What if corporate advertisers jump at the chance to make money? What if everyone agrees that the winner gets to keep a hefty slice of the proceeds? What if a portion of the proceeds goes to fighting breast cancer?"

The answer, Donohue suggests, is all too obvious: "If the only value that matters is freedom of choice, then the duel is on."

Not to worry, Donohue isn't predicting the legalization of dueling, much less advocating it. This bit of fantasy is only meant to underline the craziness that surrounds the social acceptance of various aberrations already approved or currently being advocated, on the principle that the fundamental good to be preserved and promoted in the setting of social policy is the freedom to do as you please. (And dueling? The chances of dueling being legalized in America in the foreseeable future are of course somewhere between slight and nonexistent. Bear in mind, though, that the same thing was said not so long ago about same-sex marriage and, before that, about abortion. Like much else, social approval of bad policies and destructive practices occurs with breakneck speed these days.)

The little mind game about dueling is one of the small gems buried in Donohue's new book, *Common Sense Catholicism* (Ignatius Press). The volume is a well reasoned, vigorously argued, immensely timely, and intensely serious defense of the wisdom embodied in the insights of the American founders and the social doctrine of the Catholic Church. Its practical relevance is clear from the subtitle: *How to Resolve Our Cultural Crisis*. If this won't do it, the reader comes away thinking, nothing short of some sort of social cataclysm will.

But what is the "common sense" that Donohue celebrates as the solution to our cultural ills? The dictionary defines it as "sound and prudent judgment based on a simple perception of

the situation or facts.” This is to say common sense is best understood as another name for the cardinal virtue of prudence as it is found in the Aristotelian-Thomistic catalogue of virtues.

Concerning prudence the eminent Thomist philosopher Joseph Pieper writes: “The meaning of the virtue of prudence...is primarily this: that not only the end of human action but also the means for its realization shall be in keeping with the truth of real things. This in turn necessitates that the egocentric ‘interests’ of man be silenced...so that reality itself may guide him to the proper means for realizing his goal.” Prudence—common sense—understood this way is traditionally held to be first among the virtues, for without the well-balanced guidance of prudence, the other virtues are at risk of going awry, justice becoming rigorism, fortitude becoming rashness, and temperance becoming prudishness.

Bill Donohue has been fighting this particular good fight for many years as president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. *Common Sense Catholicism*, however, is not so much concerned to defend the Catholic Church against attacks as to tap the resources of the Catholic tradition as a service to the common good. Noting the alarming disarray of contemporary American culture, he states his case at the start:

“It wasn’t always this way, and it doesn’t have to be this way. Getting back on track, however, requires that we figure out what happened and why, and then apply the right remedies. To understand what ails us, we need to put aside the notion that our problems are fundamentally political and economic. They are not. American society is in trouble largely because our social and cultural house is broken...We have adopted policies, norms, and values that are at odds with some very fundamental truths governing human nature...The collapse of common sense is driving our derailment.”

The text that follows is divided into three large sections under the familiar catchwords of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, and fraternity. There is deliberate irony in this of course, inasmuch as the vision of the French *philosophes* who provided intellectual underpinning for that historic outburst was grievously flawed, much like the rationalizing of today's secular "deep thinkers" whom Donohue skewers mercilessly in his book but whose bad ideas so often shape our laws and policies.

Consider the prevailing confusion about that fundamental value, liberty. For many people today, liberty means freedom to do as you please. But it is the absolutizing of freedom of that sort which lies at the heart of so many of our largest social problems. Immature individuals tend naturally to suppose that this is the highest level of freedom; adolescents straining to shake off the requirements imposed by authority—parents, teachers, others in a position to tell them what to do—are seeking freedom to do as they please. But a more mature view of the matter suggests that merely doing as you please is neither the last word on liberty nor an unqualified good. To be sure, some degree of this sort of freedom is essential to moral responsibility. But for anyone living in social relationships with others, unconditional freedom to do as you please is impossible—and would be undesirable even if somehow possible.

Yet the assertion of a right to unconditional freedom of this kind now functions as a touchstone in setting social policy relating to questions of personal behavior. And not only adolescents think this way. For example, in a notorious opinion in 1992 affirming an unconditional right of unfettered access to abortion (*Planned Parenthood v. Casey*), three justices of the Supreme Court—Anthony Kennedy, Sandra Day O'Connor, and David Souter—delivered themselves of this remarkable sentiment: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the

universe, and of the mystery of human life.”

Pause and let that sink in. Is the universe really whatever and however I choose to define it? Try telling that to someone—which is to say, everyone—who now and then knocks his or her head up against a hard, external something called reality. Yet just such balderdash lies at the very “heart of liberty” as it is understood by those who share the world view championed by Justices Kennedy, O’Connor, and Souter. One is reminded of something George Orwell, quoted by Donohue, once said: “One has to belong to the intelligentsia to believe things like that: no ordinary man could be such a fool.” (It should come as no surprise that Justice Kennedy went on to write the Supreme Court’s majority opinion declaring a constitutional right to same-sex marriage.)

Absurd as it is, this view of liberty would nevertheless be merely amusing were it not for its profoundly destructive practical consequences. Not long ago I came across the following posted outside the office door of some people I know: “Freedom’s just another word for nothing left to lose.” The source was identified as that enormously popular rock singer of the 1960s Janis Joplin, and an internet search showed that the line occurs in a Joplin song about a woman who has hit rock bottom after losing her boyfriend. While the song has a certain poignancy in depicting despair, what it says about freedom is self-pitying nihilism. This, you might say, is where doing as you please and only that tragically ends. (Janis Joplin—God rest her soul—died of a heroin overdose in 1970.)

By contrast, there is the clear, sweet music of common sense in something like this from Donohue: “Our cultural crisis is our own doing. It can be undone, but only if we commit ourselves to creating a society of ordered liberty. Otherwise, we will collapse under the weight of rights run amuck. Freedom has a lovely face, but when it is distorted, there is nothing uglier.”

The disastrous social consequences of the embrace of individualistic doing-as-you-please may nowhere be more obvious in America today than in the calamitous decline of marriage and family life. Over the last seventy years, such causal factors as no-fault divorce, sexual libertinism, and legalized abortion have contributed to an ongoing social disaster now clearly visible in such things as the fact that four out of ten American children are now born out of wedlock (seven out of ten among blacks, five out of ten among Hispanics). The marriage rate has fallen below the rate at the depth of the Great Depression (7.9 per thousand in 1932, 6.9 per thousand in 2015), cohabiting adults numbered about 18 million in 2016 (an increase of 4 million in just nine years), and the birth rate reported last year by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention fell to a new low of about 60 per 1,000 women ages 15-44, well below the replacement rate. The U.S. has now joined Japan and the countries of Western Europe in the demographic winter.

In the hands of secularists, moreover, the ideology of do-as-you-please freedom readily operates as an engine driving social control and coercion. In this it mirrors the thinking of the spiritual father of the French Revolution, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who in his influential *Social Contract* offered this chilling bit of counsel: "In order that the social compact may not be an empty formula, it tacitly includes the undertaking, which alone gives force to the rest, that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body. This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free." And so the door is flung open for secularist ideologues to persecute dissenters in ways ranging from the Soviet Gulags to the hounding of bakers and florists who refuse in conscience to provide their services to same-sex marriage celebrations.

Near the end of *Common Sense Catholicism*, Bill Donohue says this: "The social teachings of the Catholic Church are ordered

toward the good of individuals and society. They work because they are in harmony with human nature, respecting the limitations of the human condition...If freedom, equality, and fraternity are to be realized, we can do no better than to heed what the Church instructs us to do." As a realist, nevertheless, he knows perfectly well that this is a large order indeed at a time when the Catholic Church, far from being heeded, is itself often a target of scorn and derision while unconcealed persecution may perhaps lie just around the corner. "If our cultural crisis is to be rectified," Donohue writes, "we will have to stop treating the public expression of religion as if it were a problem. We need to get over our public phobia of religion."

Here's hoping that this invigorating book carries this message to many readers soon. The time may be shorter than we care to think.

Russell Shaw is the author of more than twenty books, and has served as communications director for the U.S. Bishops and information director for the Knights of Columbus. He is also a member of the Catholic League's board of advisers.

MICHIGAN AG'S ANTI-CATHOLIC BIAS

Dana Nessel, Michigan's new Attorney General, is not off to a good start with Catholics. In February, she held a press conference where she insulted Catholics. Her topic was a state investigation into allegations of Catholic clergy sexual abuse. She threw a sucker punch at Catholics by telling residents to "ask to see their badge and not their rosary"

when contacted by investigators.

Why hasn't Nessel launched an investigation of every institution, religious and secular, where adults intermingle with minors on a regular basis? Why did she cherry pick Catholic ones?

Would she allow the authorities to contact residents seeking information about street crime committed by African Americans? Wouldn't that be racial profiling? And would she make a racial slur at a press conference on this subject?

By singling out Catholic institutions, Nessel is engaging in religious profiling. The only entity in the state, besides Catholic ones, that she is pursuing over allegations of sexual abuse is Michigan State University, home of the infamous Larry Nassar crimes and the cover up by university officials.

Is Nessel aware of the fact that the sexual abuse of minors is rampant in Michigan? In 2017, Michigan ranked 6th in the number of reported cases of human trafficking according to CARE House. In 2016, USA Today published a major story on how the 50 states deal with the sexual abuse of minors in the public schools. Michigan received an "F."

The newspaper noted the failings by reporting that "Weak screening, left to local school districts" was commonplace. "No information online about teacher disciplinary actions" was noted. Perhaps worst of all was the finding that "Some teachers' misconduct [was] not shared with other states." So Michigan just "passed the trash," as it is known in the public school industry.

Michigan gets a failing grade for handling sexual abuse cases in the public schools and Nessel gives them a pass! It is almost too hard to believe. It proves that she is not interested in combating sexual abuse, for if she were she wouldn't let public schools off the hook.

Further proof that Nessel discriminates against Catholics can be shown by accessing her website. Under “Initiatives” she lists five issues, the first of which is “Catholic Church Clergy Abuse.” She even has a form where the public can submit information about alleged offenses. There is a similar form that applies to Michigan State University, but there is no form for anyone else.

The Catholic Church does not own this problem. More important, it has made such great strides in recent decades that it is almost non-existent in this country today. The same is not true of other institutions.

To acquaint Nessel with the scope of the problem, we have compiled a tally of recent cases. Abusers include teachers, administrators, doctors, lawyers, family members, online predators, and law enforcement personnel. We have even included a list of recidivists, or repeat offenders.

MICHIGAN OFFICIALS ASKED TO PROBE THE SCHOOLS

As we pointed out recently, perverts and rapists are preying on public school students in Michigan today, yet neither Governor Gretchen Whitmer nor Attorney General Dana Nessel are asking for an investigation of the schools. That’s because they are too busy hounding the Catholic Church.

Nessel recently started an investigation of clergy sexual abuse, but not of ministers, rabbis, or imams—only Catholic priests—and Whitmer is asking state legislators for a \$2 million supplemental allocation to pay for the Catholic probe.

Why only Catholic priests? Was there some breaking news that priests are on a rampage molesting students? No. It is due to one thing: the Pennsylvania grand jury report released last year that detailed wholly unchallenged and unsubstantiated charges against priests, most of whom were dead or out of ministry.

Why was the Pennsylvania grand jury report launched? Not because of some pending crisis initiated by law enforcement or reporters. It began because one bishop turned in one high school faculty member who was accused of an offense in the 1990s.

Now ask yourself this question: If a school superintendent turned in a teacher for an old offense, would Pennsylvania's Attorney General launch an investigation of every public school in the state dating back to when Truman was president?

In any event, what does this have to do with Michigan? Nessel argues that if there were cases of abuse in Pennsylvania—dating back to World War II—then surely there must be cases in Michigan. Surely there are. Ditto for the public schools. So why aren't lawmakers being asked to investigate them?

Does Michigan have a problem with public school students being sexually abused? Clearly it does. How do we know? Because in the 50-state analysis of this issue conducted by *USA Today*, published in 2016, Michigan was rated among the worst in the nation: It received a grade of "F." Also, in 2017, CARE House ranked Michigan 6th in the nation in the number of cases of human trafficking.

Accordingly, Bill Donohue has written to Governor Whitmer and the entire state legislature asking for an investigation of sexual abuse in the public schools. If they decide to cherry pick the Catholic Church, they would be guilty of religious profiling. Moreover, the courts may see them as engaging in

religious discrimination. Surely many Catholics, and non-Catholics, would.

The Catholic League takes this issue seriously. That is why we filed an amicus brief defending the rights of priests in Pennsylvania last year. We won, 6-1, in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court last December.

THE GULLIBLE GEORGE WILL

Opinion writers who opine about matters they are not well grounded in are a problem. George Will is such a man. A devout atheist, he takes the Catholic Church to task for offenses, real and contrived, relying heavily on the work of Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro, the man behind the discredited Pennsylvania grand jury report on the Church.

If Will took the time to read the grand jury report, which Bill Donohue did, and if he took the time to read the John Jay reports on the issue of clergy abuse, which Donohue did, he would not appear so gullible.

Donohue debunked the grand jury report when it was released. One of the myths he addressed is taken up by Will. He begins his article by saying, “‘Horseplay,’ a term to denote child-rage, is, says Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro, part of a sinister glossary of euphemisms by which the Catholic Church’s bureaucracy obfuscates the church’s ‘pattern of abuse’ and conspiracy of silence.”

Will took Shapiro’s bait. First of all, most of the alleged victims were neither children nor were they raped: inappropriate touching of adolescents—which is indefensible—was the typical offense. So stop the hyperbole,

Mr. Will.

Also, the word “horseplay” was not part of the lexicon of Church officials: it appears once in over 1300 pages of the report, and it was used to describe the behavior of a seminarian. Once again, Will fell for Shapiro’s ploy.

Don’t take Donohue’s word for it—read what Peter Steinfelds said about Shapiro’s grand jury report; he is a former religion reporter for the New York Times.

After reading the report, fact checking the accusations, and speaking to those familiar with the report, including people in Shapiro’s office, Steinfelds concluded that Shapiro’s most serious and sweeping indictments of the Church are “grossly misleading, irresponsible, inaccurate, and unjust.”

Don’t take Steinfelds’ word for it—consider what happened in December. That’s when the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled 6-1 in favor of eleven accused priests who claimed that releasing their names to the public would violate their reputational rights as guaranteed by the Pennsylvania Constitution. The Catholic League filed an amicus brief in this case.

The court ruled that the report contained “false, misleading, incorrect and unsupported accusations.”

Will needs to rewrite his article, rebutting what Donohue said, what Steinfelds wrote, and what the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled.

He should know better than to cite a grand jury report as the basis of his article. The priests named in the grand jury report were never afforded the right to challenge the accusations. That is because such reports are investigative, not evidentiary.

In 2015, after Will accused Pope Francis of standing against “modernity, rationality, science, and ultimately...open

societies,” Donohue wrote the following about him: “He is an educated man, but his grasp of Catholicism is on a par with that of Bill Maher’s.” Looks like nothing has changed.

THIESSEN’S MISTAKE

The following letter to the editor by Bill Donohue was published March 10 in the Washington Post:

Marc A. Thiessen’s call for Catholics to stop making donations to the bishops’ Lenten appeals was badly flawed [“Boycott the bishops,” op-ed, March 6]. Once Pope Francis asked the bishops to pitch matters such as the case of former cardinal Theodore McCarrick to Rome, it made any vote on this issue moot. It was unfair to suggest that Cardinal Gerhard Müller, former prefect of the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, acted irresponsibly by deciding not to answer every victim’s letter: Those at the local level are best suited for this job.

Mr. Thiessen said “we are still learning new information from grand juries” about sexual abuse. He failed to note that what we are learning includes unsubstantiated cases from the past century. Many abusing priests are dead or out of the ministry. Moreover, the bishops have made great progress since U.S. bishops adopted reforms in 2002. For Mr. Thiessen not to acknowledge this verity seriously undermined his plea to boycott the bishops.

The dust-up between Donohue and Thiessen was picked up by Catholic News Service. Both men stuck to their guns.

Thiessen said “the only way to get through to them [the bishops] is to withhold our money.” If the poor get hurt, he said, “there are other sources of funds they can tap into.”

Donohue said Thiessen “gives the reader no idea that the crisis in this country has been licked.” Furthermore, he said, “The damage was done to the church during the sexual revolution. The way his article is written...suggests that we are stuck in a time warp.”

In closing, Donohue noted that “A lot of the priests who were delinquent...they’re either dead or out of ministry...If we give off the idea that we have not made any progress, that is simply wrong.”

ASSESSING GAY PRIESTS’ ROLE IN THE SCANDAL

Prior to the February Vatican summit on clergy sexual abuse, Vatican observer Edwin Pentin wrote that it was “not clear” whether “the role of homosexuality in the abuse crisis” would be addressed. It wasn’t. And one thing is for sure: every effort to downplay the role of gays is being made.

A front-page story in the February 18 edition of the *New York Times* is typical of the way most of the media are covering this subject. “Studies repeatedly find there to be no connection between being gay and abusing children. Yet prominent bishops have singled out gay priests as the root of the problem, and right-wing media organizations attack what they have called the church’s ‘homosexual subculture,’ ‘lavender mafia,’ or ‘gay cabal.’”

Furthermore, Cardinal Blase Cupich, who was at the summit, says that while most of the problem is a result of “male on male” sex abuse, “homosexuality itself is not a cause.” He says it can be explained as a matter of “opportunity and also

a matter of poor training on the part of the people.”

All of these statements can be challenged. First of all, not all studies have shown that there is no link between homosexuals and the sexual abuse of minors.

A good summary of the literature that shows the central role of homosexual priests in the abuse scandal can be found in an article by Brian W. Clowes and David L. Sonnier. The most recent research that challenges the conventional wisdom on this subject is the study by D. Paul Sullins, a sociologist who teaches at Catholic University of America. He found that the link between homosexual priests and sexual abuse was strong.

Let it be said emphatically that it is morally wrong to blame all gay priests or to bully someone who is gay, be he a priest or a plumber. It is also wrong to call on all gay priests to resign: such a sweeping recommendation is patently unfair to those gay priests who have never violated anyone.

However, it is not helpful to the cause of eradicating the problem of sexual abuse in the priesthood to dismiss a conversation about the obvious. We can begin by talking honestly about who the victims are.

Notice that the *New York Times* says there is no connection between homosexuality and abusing “children.” This is a common way of framing the issue, and it is a deceitful one. Most of the victims were adolescents, not children. In other words, the problem is not pedophilia.

We know from one report after another, in both this country and abroad, that approximately 80 percent of the victims are both male *and* postpubescent. Ergo, the issue is homosexuality. This does not mean that homosexuality, per se, *causes* someone to be a predator (Cupich is technically right about that), but it does say that homosexuals are disproportionately represented in the sexual abuse of minors. We cannot ignore

this reality.

The American Pediatric Association says that puberty begins at age 10 for boys. A study of more than 4,000 boys examined by a doctor, nationwide, also put the figure at age 10. The John Jay report on priestly sexual abuse found that less than 5 percent of the victims were prepubescent, meaning that pedophilia is not the problem.

The John Jay researchers try to protect homosexuals by saying that not all the men who had sex with adolescent males consider themselves to be homosexuals. But self-identification is not dispositive. If the gay priests thought they were giraffes, would the scholars conclude that the problem is bestiality?

It was the John Jay researchers who first floated the “opportunity” thesis that Cardinal Cupich picked up on. This idea is flawed. Predator priests hit on boys not because they were denied access to girls, but because they preferred males. More important, there is something patently unfair, as well as inaccurate, about this line of thinking.

It suggests that many priests are inclined to have sex with minors—and will choose the sex which offers them the greatest opportunity. There is no evidence to support this unjust indictment. Also, girl altar servers date back to 1983, after Canon law was changed. They became even more common in 1994 when Pope John Paul II ruled that girls can be altar servers.

If the “opportunity” thesis had any truth to it, we should have seen, over the past few decades, a spike in altar girls being sexually abused by priests, but this has not happened. Indeed, 80 percent of the victims are still male and postpubescent.

The notion that “poor training” is responsible for the scandal raises the obvious question: If all seminarians, straight and gay, were trained the same way (they were not segregated),

then why didn't the "poor training" that the heterosexuals experienced lead them to sexually abuse minors?

Finally, every honest observer who has examined this subject knows there is a homosexual subculture in the Church. Two months ago, Pope Francis said "homosexuality is fashionable and that mentality, in some way, also influences the life of the church." Previously, he spoke about the "gay lobby" in the Church. Moreover, a 2016 decree on training for priests spoke about the "gay culture." Also, it was Father Andrew Greeley who used the term "lavender mafia."

Pope Francis is not a "right-winger," and neither was Greeley.

We need to stop, once and for all, playing politics with this issue and face up to some tough realities.

CLERICALISM DOES NOT CAUSE SEXUAL ABUSE

It is popular in left-wing circles to adopt the Marxist vision of society, one which interprets social interaction purely on the basis of power. According to this perspective, society consists of power brokers and their subjects, and not much more. This is a very narrow lens, a myopic condition that blinds them to reality.

Applied to the clergy sexual abuse scandal, those on the Left, such as the *National Catholic Reporter* and Faith in Public Life, blame clericalism, or elitism, as the cause of the scandal.

An editorial in the February 20 *National Catholic Reporter*

said clergy sexual abuse has “its roots deep in a clerical culture that valued secrecy, privilege and power over the welfare of child victims and their families.”

Similarly, John Gehring of Faith in Public Life (who is funded by atheist billionaire George Soros) says that “The root cause of this existential crisis for the church is clericalism, an insulated patriarchal culture where priests and bishops are viewed as a privileged class set apart.”

Father Hans Zollner, a Jesuit who helped to organize the bishops’ summit on sexual abuse, also believes that “abuse of power” is the cause of the scandal.

Clericalism, of course, has never provoked a single priest to abuse anyone. That is a function of sexual recklessness, a behavior more commonly exercised by homosexual priests than their heterosexual counterparts. In short, irresponsible decisions account for sexual molestation, not a mantle of power.

Think of it this way. If elitism caused sexual abuse, then those who occupy positions of power in the National Education Association (NEA) should be more likely to abuse minors than the teachers who occupy a subordinate position. But it is not the NEA executives, anymore than it is the bishops, who are sexually acting out, it is the teachers and the priests who serve under them.

Does this mean that clericalism plays no role in the scandal? No. There are two parties to this problem: the enabling bishops and the molesting priests.

Some of the former failed to act responsibly because they had a “bishop knows best” mentality, which is a form of clericalism. But that had nothing to do with the behavior of the abusers. Others listened to the therapists, many of whom were not supportive of the Church’s teachings on sexuality, and who therefore contributed to the problem. Their role in

the scandal is still underreported and underrated.

The preoccupation with clericalism on the part of so-called progressive Catholics has more to do with their myopia, and their desire to divert attention away from homosexuality, than with a pursuit of the truth. No one should fall for their game.