

# NPR'S DOUBLE STANDARD

Recently NPR made headlines after it fired Juan Williams after he made an allegedly anti-Muslim comment. But we were quick to point out that nobody had ever been fired by NPR for their anti-Catholic fare.

To be explicit, on Jan. 7, 2008, the Utah NPR station, KCPW, aired a skit lampooning Mike Huckabee that trashed Jesus. On the show, "Fair Game with Faith Salie," the following was said: "Tired of bland unsatisfying Eucharists? Try this Huckabee family favorite. Deep-Fried Body of Christ—boring holy wafers no more...Mike likes his Christ with whipped cream and sprinkles." After we complained, we heard from Public Radio International, which produced the show, and they pulled it, issuing an apology. While the show did not originate at NPR, its Utah affiliate did not have to air it. No one was fired.

On July 5, 1997, NPR mocked the Eucharist when host Scott Simon and musical satirist, Tom Lehrer, got together. Lehrer sang "The Vatican Rag." The following are some of the lyrics: "Try playing it safer, drink the wine and chew the wafer"; "Two, four, six, eight, time to Trans-substantiate."

Moreover, if Williams merited being fired for expressing reservations about people with Muslim garb boarding a plane, then why was it okay for Dahlia Lithwick of NPR (at the time) to express her reservations about having "too many Catholics" on the Supreme Court? On Nov. 1, 2005, she exclaimed, "People are very, very much talking about the fact that Alito would be the fifth Catholic on the Supreme Court if confirmed." Earlier, on Aug. 2, she expressed concerns about the "very, very strong religious views" of Catholic Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas.

Moreover, on July 23, Nina Totenberg of NPR raised a red flag over high court nominee John Roberts' wife because she was "an officer of a pro-life organization." As for Roberts himself, she said, "He's got adopted children. I mean, he's a conservative Catholic."

We found the duplicity is sickening and asked our members to contact Anna Christopher, NPR's media relations manager.

A few hours after we issued our release, Christopher placed a phone call to Jeff Field, the Catholic League's director of

communications. She called Field to complain about our news release. She accused us of “cherry-picking” instances of NPR’s anti-Catholic programming, adding that our “heated” news release resulted in a large amount of “mean-spirited” e-mails. We didn’t “cherry-pick” anything: we simply went to our files and cited a few examples of National Public Radio’s intolerance of Catholicism. The news release, as anyone could see, was hardly “heated.” Moreover, we are not responsible for any allegedly “mean-spirited” e-mails she may have received. Talk about thin-skinned. Why is it that NPR can dish it out, but can’t take it? If it doesn’t want Catholics complaining, then lay off us. And while they’re at it, they might think about leveling the playing field when it comes to employee “misconduct.”

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## **OBAMA: RIGHTS STEM FROM THE STATE**

Recently, President Barack Obama set off a firestorm after he gave a few speeches this fall; the president quoted from the Declaration of Independence, omitting any reference to God.

At an October fundraiser in Rockville, Maryland, he spoke of “inalienable rights,” mentioning that “all men are created equal,” but omitted what comes after this phrase: namely, he did not say “that they are endowed by their Creator” with these unalienable rights.

Only a month before that, after Obama omitted the same words before the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (there are four references to God in the Declaration), we faulted his speech writers but defended the president by saying he should have been “given a pass.” We could no longer do so. We said that it was painfully obvious that President Obama does not believe that individual rights are given to us by God.

The most dramatic historical achievement of the American Revolution was the insistence of the Founders that the state

is not the source of our rights. What the state grants, it can take away. We saw this most strikingly under the Soviets: the Soviet Constitution was a marvelous tribute to human liberty, the only problem being that it made the state the origin of individual rights. By declaring God to be the origin of rights, the Founders deliberately awarded a subordinate role to government.

Addressing the media on this issue, Bill Donohue said, "President Obama is the first president in American history not to acknowledge that all rights stem from God. Given that all prepared presidential speeches are written and vetted by many people, and that he was roundly criticized last month for this same infraction, it is only fair to conclude that this was not a mistake. This was deliberate."

It was only a few days after we issued our news release that the president used the word "Creator" in three separate instances over a single weekend. Guess he got the message.

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## **"BOARDWALK EMPIRE" REACHES NEW LOW**

On a recent episode of the HBO series "Boardwalk Empire," a gratuitous cheap shot was taken at Catholics. The scene that outraged Catholics all over, was the one in which a group of men were watching a silent film in which a nun is having sex. There is something pernicious about Hollywood's non-stop assault on Catholicism. The shot of a nun on her hands and knees being penetrated from behind, and another that showed a man performing cunnilingus on her, was thrown into the show, just to stick it to Catholics. When addressing this episode, Bill Donohue said, "There is nothing left to the imagination—this is graphic pornography."

It is no wonder that Hollywood's hatred of religion, especially Roman Catholicism, has turned so many against it, even, regrettably, to the point of violence. This latest

contribution, thanks to the show's executive producer, Martin Scorsese, was particularly vile. Indeed, it reaches a new low. The time has come for our members to write directly to Richard Plepler, co-president of HBO [contact him at 1100 Avenue of the Americas, NY, NY 10036]. Bill Donohue knows him, and while they have a cordial relationship, he wants you to weigh in; what HBO is doing is wrong. Remember, they also air Bill Maher's show.

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## **BILL MAHER JUST CAN'T MOVE ON**

Bill Maher is back on the radar screen of the Catholic League. He recently lashed out at Catholicism on two different occasions: comments about gay priests on MSNBC's "The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell"; and his explanation to CNN's Wolf Blitzer about controversial comments he made about Muslims on his HBO show.

On the MSNBC show, Larry O'Donnell took some legitimate jabs at Republican candidates in this fall's election, citing them for making what he labeled as "stupid comparisons" between being gay and being an alcoholic or obese. Bill Maher agreed, but couldn't help but take the opportunity to once again attack homosexual priests, painting them all as molesters.

In an apparent Freudian slip, Maher said, "We really can't resist [talking about gays in the Catholic Church] if it's all around us." He should have personalized it: he can't talk about gays without talking about priests. "You know," he continued, "that's how the Catholic Church talks about it. You know, 'our priests are not sinning, they're just giving into temptation when they're molesting children and going gay and stuff like that.'"

Maher is correct to imply that most of the molesting priests have been homosexuals: eight in ten have been. But he is wrong to imply that most gay priests have been molesters. Moreover, the Catholic Church has never sanctioned such behavior. Indeed, one of the reasons why this problem has been checked in the Catholic Church—no institution, secular or religious,

has a better record these days—is precisely because homosexual candidates for the priesthood are screened very carefully.

Maier needs to get up to date. He should instead focus on the rampant sexual abuse that occurs in the public schools, and the central role the teachers' unions play in fighting necessary reforms. But he would no more take on the teachers than Jay Leno or Joy Behar ever would. They are much more at home bashing Catholics.

A couple of weeks following his appearance with O'Donnell, Maier appeared on Wolf Blitzer's CNN program.

Blitzer asked Maier to discuss the remarks he had recently made about Muslims; on his HBO show, Maier expressed concerns about the popularity of naming boys Muhammad in the U.K., noting the high birth rate of Muslims and how this does not bode well for the future. When asked to explain himself, Maier gave a lengthy response, citing his interest in maintaining such Western values as liberty and equality (he either does not know that those values originated with Christianity, or does not want to admit it).

Maier's response to Muslims was eminently fair. But when contrasted with his comments on Catholics, it made him look like a rank hypocrite. The kinds of despicable statements he has made over the years about Catholicism—trashing Jesus, mocking the Eucharist, ridiculing the pope, portraying all priests as molesters—demonstrates his duplicity. Even when pressed to explain his "controversial" remarks about Muslims, he showed more respect for Islam than he has ever shown for Catholicism. Indeed, he looked positively defensive trying to get this monkey off his back: he is never defensive about discussing his Catholic bashing. Maybe "defensive" is not the right word—he looked a little scared. Wonder why.

There is something sick about Maier. With an Irish-Catholic father and a Jewish mother, one might have thought that he would be sensitive to both anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism. But not a chance. It's just anti-Semitism that seems to bother him: he's quite at home tolerating, and even contributing to, anti-Catholicism.

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# VICTORY IN GEORGIA

We recently received word that a disturbing video was shown at a seminar for the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association (GTLA) and then was placed on the organization's website. The video "A World Without Lawyers," highlighted the benefits of trial lawyers including their roles in medical malpractice, fighting corporations and civil rights.

The disturbing element of the video was that it mentioned, "Attorneys fought to expose generations of hidden sexual abuse..." followed by an image of the *Boston Globe's* front-page story of Cardinal Bernard Law's resignation. Thus, giving the impression that all Catholic bishops were guilty of wrongdoing.

After we received word, Bill Donohue immediately sent GTLA president Michael Warshauer a letter objecting to the use of the image in the video. After he received the letter, Warshauer removed the offensive image from the video from the GTLA website and his personal website as well.

We are happy that this issue came to a fair resolution.

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# VICTIMS' SUMMIT BUST

Last April, the *National Catholic Reporter* ran a story on the so-called "Victims' Summit," a gathering of alleged victims of priestly sexual abuse that was scheduled to take place at the Vatican in St. Peter's Square on October 31. At that time, Bernie McDaid, one of the organizers, predicted they would amass 50,000 people in a massive show of anger against the Catholic Church.

When the dissident Catholic newspaper recently reported on the event, it mentioned that a grand total of 60 protesters showed up near St. Peter's Square.

Looks like this issue has run its course.

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## **CNN RETRACTS BOGUS FIGURE**

On November 11, investigator John Walsh was interviewed by CNN's Anderson Cooper on the subject of pedophilia. Walsh mentioned that 100,000 victims of priestly sexual abuse had recently sought a meeting with the pope. He was referring to the so-called "Victims' Summit"; we cited 60 who showed up, while others gave the figure of 100.

We contacted CNN immediately asking for a retraction, and we got one. Anderson Cooper was very fair: he said the correct figure was 100, not 100,000. Indeed, he even apologized for misrepresenting the actual count, even though the error was made by his guest.

Because Bill Donohue had recently written to several CNN officials complaining about its documentary on the pope, he thought it only fair to write to the same persons thanking them for being so fair about this matter.

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## **"MEMPHIS" IS A MUST SEE**

Catholic League director of communications Jeff Field recently had the opportunity to see the Broadway show "Memphis." Unlike most plays these days, this is one which most Christians will find entertaining and inspiring.

Opening to critical acclaim in October of 2009, the Broadway musical "Memphis" is a hit that should not be missed. Set in the segregated southern city of Memphis in the 1950s, the musical is more than a show full of catchy tunes and a wonderful cast; it is a lesson on how to live our lives true to our Christian values and a demonstration of the importance of God.

The story revolves around a young white disc-jockey named Huey

and a black lounge singer named Felicia. When Huey first heard Felicia sing, he was moved and knew that her voice could be one to help bring unity to an area divided by race. It is through her voice and the redemptive quality of religion that help bridge that gap.

A tale of redemption, faith, forgiveness and hope, it is no wonder why "Memphis" won the Tony Award for Best Musical in 2010. The show will have you thinking, laughing and tapping your feet. When looking for a Broadway hit, that is sure not to disappoint, look no further than "Memphis."

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# THE ENDURING LEGACY OF JOHN PAUL II

**Ronald J. Rychlak**

George Weigel's magnificent biography of Pope John Paul II, *Witness to Hope*, was published in 1999. Knowing that the pope's story was not over, Weigel promised that he would one day write a completion. This is it, and it is a powerful and welcome compliment to the earlier biography, but it is much more than that. This book stands on its own and gives the reader an authentic sense of history, of Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II) and his place in history, and of the Catholic Church and her teaching.

The first part of *The End and the Beginning*, "Nemesis," is a riveting account of John Paul II's battles with Soviet Communism. The second section, "Kenosis," offers an unforgettable portrait of John Paul II's efforts to spread Catholic teachings, from his early years until his physical demise. The third section, "Metanoia," examines John Paul's inner motivation and his place in history. Overall, the book provides history, biography, theology, and much drama.

The section on Soviet actions against the Church is particularly exciting and unexpected. Many of the years covered here were also covered in *Witness to Hope*, but Weigel



has new sources of information, so he has new stories to tell, and he tells them very well.

Drawing on documents from the archives of the Soviet KGB, East Germany's Stasi, and Poland's SB, Weigel shows that the communist regimes were even more duplicitous, petty, and evil than most people had suspected, and the Church was a favorite target. Weigel writes: "Among the enemies of Soviet communism, real and imagined, none was more feared by the KGB and its predecessor than the Catholic Church." This fear of the Church spread to other intelligence agencies across the Soviet bloc.

Poland and the pope's Polish identity is an important part of this story. Weigel explains: "The Catholic Church, which suffered terribly during World War II, had emerged with its honor intact and its historic role as the repository of Polish national identity and memory confirmed." After World War II, Pope Pius XII took a hard line against communism, and the Soviets brutally repressed the Polish Church and Church leaders (especially Bishop—later Cardinal —Stefan Wyszyński). Weigel calls Poland under the Soviets "a country in which men of unblemished honor and extraordinary heroism could be convicted as traitors and murdered by communist thugs."

Shortly before the future pope was made a bishop in 1958, the Soviets ratcheted up their campaign against the Church. Soviet agents monitored Bishop Woytyla for years. They did not, however, originally see him as a serious threat. After all, he was just a poet and an artist. They did not know the heart or the future of this young Polish priest.

Within months of his election, John Paul II ignited a revolution of conscience in Poland, and it ultimately led to the collapse of European communism and the demise of the Soviet Union. Of course, much of this was covered in *Witness to Hope*. New to this book, however, are many of the actions and reactions of the communist authorities. Efforts to suppress the Church in communist countries were rampant.

Soviet bloc intelligence agencies placed spies, disguised as priests or students, into many churches. Even the Eastern Orthodox Metropolitan of Leningrad, one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches, was a KGB agent. Spies were not only in Polish churches during Woytyla's years as bishop, they were in the Vatican itself during his pontificate. These agents tried to influence political policies and theological

doctrine (especially with liberation theology).

In chronicling this secret war between the Vatican and the Soviet Union, Weigel reveals the astonishing lengths to which the Soviet bloc was willing to go to undermine John Paul II. He offers little new information regarding Soviet involvement in the 1981 assassination attempt, but he does note that most Poles and many close friends of the pope felt that the Soviets were not completely innocent. He also makes clear that Western democracies did not look very hard; they were afraid of what they would find.

One fascinating story relates to an effort to smear the pope's reputation. Using their counterfeiting experts, in 1983 Polish intelligence agents crafted a phony diary purportedly written by a former lover of Cardinal Woytyla. They used the identity of a woman he would have known but who had since passed away. The plan was to leave the diary hidden in an apartment where it would be found during a police raid. Western reporters would assume that it was legitimate and report on it as such. As it turned out, however, the agent assigned to plant the fake diary got drunk and was involved in an automobile accident. In an effort to avoid arrest and detention, he explained who he was and exposed the plan. One can only wonder what would have happened had the pope's credibility been damaged early in his pontificate by a disinformation scheme like this.

Soviet bloc intelligence agents also conducted phony letter-writing campaigns against the pope, and they sought out "malleable publishers in capitalist and developing countries" to damage the Church's reputation by producing books about the Inquisition, the Vatican's alleged relations with Nazism, and the Church's wealth. These hatchet jobs were often complimented with blackmail campaigns against Vatican personnel.

An interesting issue for students of Vatican diplomacy is the relationship between the late pope and his Secretary of State, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli. In 1979 John Paul made Casaroli a Cardinal and named him Secretary of State even though they took very different approaches to communism. Casaroli was the principal architect of the Vatican's policy of Ostpolitik—cautious reconciliation with communist governments. John Paul was more directly confrontational. Despite Soviet

assurances to the contrary, he knew that it was impossible to have "communism with a human face."

Sometimes Cassaroli was afraid that the pope's actions would lead to bloodshed. It didn't. Weigel credits the pope for both his effective use of Cassaroli's skills and for playing a pivotal role in the collapse of European communism. There are those who would dispute this analysis (arguing that communism would eventually have collapsed under its own weight), but Weigel makes a persuasive case that John Paul ignited a "revolution of conscience" with his nine day trip to Poland in 1979. It is hard to deny that the trip was a trigger for the collapse. "And of course: no John Paul, no nine days."

In the second part of the book, Weigel brings us very close to the man Karol Wojtyla and allows us to see him and know him as no other author could do. Weigel had years of incomparable access to John Paul II and many people in his inner circle. He puts that access to good use, showing us why the late pope has been dubbed "John Paul the Great."

From his early charge: "Be not Afraid," to the elderly man unable even to speak, Weigel shows us a real human being—a genius with a sense of humor and a warrior with a tender heart. His kenosis (self emptying) powerfully contradicted the modern culture of narcissism and inspired millions to live not for themselves but for others.

In these final years, John Paul dealt with many difficult issues: the sex scandal, science and life issues, calls for his resignation, the European Union's denial of its Christian heritage, Islamic terrorism, and the war in Iraq, just to name a few. All of these issues presented challenges for the Church and for the elderly man who led it.

There were also significant calls for liturgical reform. When Pope John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council in 1962, he expected it to ignite a new Pentecost. Instead, the liturgical reform of Vatican II "was followed rather rapidly...by diminished Mass attendance throughout Europe and North America and deteriorated sense of Eucharistic amazement." Pope John Paul tried to counter these forces, at least in part, with the Great Jubilee of 2000.

Between the opening of the door at St. Peter's Basilica on December 24, 1999 and the end of the Jubilee year, Pope John Paul II presided over numerous ceremonies, and he made a

historic pilgrimage to Israel. On that five-day visit, the pope visited holy sites and met with Israel's political leaders and chief rabbis. While there, he blessed Israel, expressed support for a Palestinian homeland, and offered an apology to God for failings of the Church. It was widely regarded as another triumph for the aging pope.

Weigel chronicles the tumultuous last years as the once avid sportsman gradually succumbs to Parkinson's and old age. He details John Paul's remarkable courage and resilience as the eyes of the world were upon him. Through his own suffering, he bore witness to the inherent dignity of the human person and came to embody the trials of billions of people across the globe.

After a moving account of John Paul's final moments, Weigel turns to the third section of his book in which he provides an in-depth analysis of John Paul's inner strength and considers his historical importance. No one will be surprised to find that Weigel considers John Paul to have had "the most consequential pontificate in centuries."

John Paul once wrote: "They try to understand me from the outside. But I can only be understood from the inside." That is probably true, but Weigel gives us the best description that can be had from the outside. Karol Wojtyla cared little for material possessions or comforts. He was nourished by prayer—a "lifelong dialogue of faith." Weigel calls it *metanoia*—a process of repentance or penance leading to a change of heart from sin to the practice of virtue. This gave John Paul the strength he exhibited throughout his life.

John Paul left behind a legacy of ideas too long to list, but Weigel addresses many, including his defense of reason, teachings on sexual ethics, and views on interreligious relations. Weigel, a just war theorist who disagreed with John Paul on the American military operation in Iraq, feels that the late pope should have done more to bring that doctrine in line with the realities of modern warfare.

*The End and the Beginning* is a fitting completion to Weigel's *Witness to Hope*. Taken together, these books serve as the authoritative chronicle and comprehensive assessment of John Paul II's life.

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