

DONOHUE ON HITCHENS

When I learned that Christopher Hitchens died on December 16, I decided not to issue a statement. It is no secret that we had an on-again, off-again relationship, and given my mixed feelings, I thought it best not to say anything. But when a reporter asked to speak with me a few days later, I elected to talk.

The article below is a reprint from the website of the Daily Caller; it was published December 19 by Steven Nelson under the title, "Hitchens Nemesis Bill Donohue Remembers 'Sloppy,' 'Overrated,' but 'Brilliant' Adversary."

I debated Hitchens many times on TV, and had a particularly eventful encounter with him in 2000 at the Union League Club in New York City. We sold copies of the video at the time, the proceeds going to the Catholic League.

Bill Donohue

Few critics of the Catholic Church were as caustic as Christopher Hitchens. That yielded a sour public relationship with Catholic League President Bill Donohue.

But a few days after the death of one of the most famous and forceful advocates of atheism and anti-theism, Donohue largely had fond words for the man he bitterly dueled with in televised debates.

"We came together on two things," Donohue told The Daily Caller. "While it wasn't particularly well-known, Christopher was pro-life and I am pro-life, and I commended him on that." Donohue also expressed admiration for Hitchens' understanding of "what these Islamofascists are about."

But their relationship wasn't always cordial. Donohue recalled Hitchens delaying a television debate until Good Friday, to

his great irritation.

Donohue also recalled an episode where Hitchens “crossed the line” with comments about Mother Teresa – about whom Hitchens wrote “The Missionary Position,” describing her as a “fanatic” and a “fraud.”

“He apologized to me two years ago and I accepted it, because that’s the way I am,” said Donohue, explaining, “Christopher was going after Mother Teresa again, but he called her a bitch, and I said, ‘you know you’re crossing the line here.’ And he admitted it and he said he was sorry.

“We were supposed to get together for a couple pints of Guinness, because both of us like to drink. Unfortunately for Christopher, he didn’t have very good brakes, but I like a man who drinks, so Christopher and I had some things in common,” said Donohue.

Discussing Mother Teresa, Donohue’s disdain for Hitchens’ book about her clearly came through. He particularly took issue with what he believed was the lack of supporting documentation. Hitchens, while he was alive, said that none of his assertions were factually lacking.

“Quite frankly he was very sloppy when it came to scholarship,” Donohue said. “I mean in many respects he was a brilliant guy, he was quick, he was a provocateur, and that’s the part of Christopher Hitchens that I loved. But when it came to the facts it didn’t seem to matter to him.”

Donohue said that he was sad to hear about Hitchens’ diagnosis with esophageal cancer. “Once I heard about that I did feel badly,” he said, “and I didn’t want to say anything negative unless someone would think, ‘oh Donohue is trying to take a cheap shot, riding off of his legacy.’”

He similarly decided against posting a statement on the Catholic League’s website, because it “would give the

appearance of very bad taste.”

“I do like the idea that he was a maverick, an iconoclast, that he went against the grain, that he did not accept political correctness and didn’t swallow the moonshine,” said Donohue. “There is a great deal there that I admire.”

“With many of the people I’ve dealt with on the left, they are cowards,” he said. “Christopher Hitchens was not a coward.”

Donohue said he wouldn’t presume to know whether Hitchens is in hell. “I would never pass judgment on him or anyone else,” he said. “It’s part of Catholic teaching that we don’t know, and indeed I would condemn any Catholic or non-Catholic who seems to know with some degree of certainty where Christopher Hitchens is.”

“For us to presume where he is would be arrogant and condemnatory,” he added. “So I would never get into that, but I can talk about the fact that he was totally overrated as a scholar, he was sloppy in his research, he was a great essayist, but an essayist is not necessarily a scholar.”

Donohue did say he prayed for Hitchens. “He was in my prayers, whether he wanted them or not, that’s none of his business, that’s my business,” he said.

The atheist movement has taken a hit with the death of the “God is Not Great” author, according to Donohue.

“I think it’s in trouble, because he was enormously influential,” said Donohue. “I’m not saying that all the atheist activists are jerks – you still have Dawkins and Dennett and these people – but I think he will be missed, because his style would at least get people to listen to him. I don’t think you can say the same for the others. They lack that panache that Christopher had.”

“OBAMACARE” AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: COLLISION COURSE LOOMS

Kenneth D. Whitehead

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, popularly known as “Obamacare,” requires individuals to purchase medical insurance and requires most employers to provide such insurance for their employees. Among other things required by the Act, when it is fully implemented, this insurance must henceforth include preventive care for women on a mandatory basis, and without the deductibles, co-payments, or co-insurance hitherto common in preventive care.

In order to determine what preventive services for women should now be mandatorily included in new insurance policies being issued, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) asked the Institute of Medicine (IOM) at the National Academy of Sciences for its recommendations. The IOM provided a list of recommended preventive services which, on August 1, 2011, HHS issued as a new federal “Rule.” This Rule is supposed to come into effect on August 1, 2012, and henceforth governing what preventive services for women will have to be covered in all “private” insurance policies.

What the Institute of Medicine recommended, and what the Department of Health and Human Services is now mandating, was no big surprise. It was probably a foregone conclusion that such measures as breast-feeding support and testing for various conditions would be included. What might cause mild surprise is that annual screening for “domestic violence” is

included as “preventive medical care.” By itself this signals that a new and novel understanding of what “preventive medical care” consists of is involved here.

This proves to be the case concerning the major preventive medical services for women henceforth to be mandatorily provided under Obamacare. These services include surgical sterilizations and all methods of contraception approved by the FDA, along with “education and counseling” promoting all these same methods and procedures among “all women of reproductive capacity.” In other words, what these mandatory preventive medical services obviously aim to “prevent” is not some disease or pathology. Rather, they aim to prevent—pregnancy and birth!

In a statement opposing the new HHS Rule immediately issued by Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, Chairman of the Committee on Pro-life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Texas prelate pointed out that “pregnancy is not a disease and fertility is not a pathological condition to be suppressed by any means technically possible.” Cardinal DiNardo noted further how the original IOM report itself claimed that surgical abortions too should be mandatory if this weren’t forbidden by current law.

A wide sector of American society today, sadly including most of the medical profession, has in fact already acquiesced in considering abortion to be a legitimate part of healthcare; this has been the case ever since this lethal procedure was legalized by the U.S. Supreme Court in its notorious *Roe v. Wade* decision back in 1973. That HHS today feels able to issue its latest Rule—without regard to the morality of what is being mandated—is just one more of the bitter fruits of America’s long acquiescence in the killing of the innocent unborn by abortion. If this is “healthcare,” *anything* can be considered healthcare.

Among the FDA-approved methods of birth control now being

mandated by HHS are “morning after”-type, abortion-inducing agents such as Plan B and Ella. These prescription drugs do not always just prevent conception; at least some of the time, they terminate a pregnancy already begun by preventing an embryo from implanting in the mother’s uterine wall. In other words, they are (or can be) methods of early abortion.

These methods with abortifacient properties nevertheless continue to be called “contraception,” or “emergency contraception.” This is one of the—dishonest and disgraceful—ways in which the medical profession, the academy, scientists generally, and the media all collude in pretending that only the prevention of conception, and not termination of an existing pregnancy, is all that is involved. It is well-known how these methods operate; it is freely admitted by their manufacturers; but it is thought that fraudulently continuing to call them “contraception” lessens the possible opposition to them.

What it means here, however, is that President Obama’s promise that abortion would not be part of Obamacare the Act is inoperative on these grounds alone, not to speak of the other ways in which abortion is only too likely to come in under the Act. In promulgating the new HHS Rule, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius—a pro-abortion Catholic ex-governor whose bishop has requested that she not present herself for Holy Communion—simply noted matter-of-factly that “since birth control is the most common drug prescribed for women ages 18 to 44 , insurance plans should cover it. Not doing it would be like not covering flu shots.”

Sebelius cannot be ignorant of the fact that many of the methods and practices that as the authorized agent of the Obama Administration she is now mandating for all Americans are condemned as immoral by the teaching authority of the Catholic Church. Catholics with properly formed consciences *cannot* use or approve of surgical sterilization or the FDA-approved methods of birth control (and not just the

abortifacient or abortion-inducing methods). Nor can they approve of the “education and counseling” of all women of reproductive age in these same methods.

In what perhaps amounts to at least a dim and partial recognition of this fact, the new HHS Rule allows an exception for some “religious employers” (though not for all Catholic Americans who will be obliged under Obamacare to purchase insurance policies covering these methods condemned by the Church). Moreover, the exception for religious employees is very narrowly defined. It includes only those employers that 1) have the inculcation of religious values as their purpose; that 2) primarily employ and 3) primarily serve only those who share their religious tenets; and also 4) are legally non-profit organizations.

While an individual Catholic parish might possibly qualify for this exception, excluded almost automatically would be Catholic hospitals, Catholic schools and colleges, and even Catholic soup kitchens or homeless shelters, none of which exclusively employ or serve only those who profess the Catholic faith. Enforcing this Rule would exclude the Church from vast areas where she currently serves society and the common good. As it currently reads, the Rule thus amounts to an unprecedented attack on and curtailment of the religious freedom of Catholics.

More than that, it requires all Catholics (because it requires all Americans), if they haven’t done so already, to purchase insurance policies which will now *mandate* methods and procedures contrary to the tenets of the Catholic faith. Catholics will be obliged under penalty of law to pay for what their Church plainly teaches is immoral. This is nothing else but tyranny, a gross violation of religious liberty.

One strains to try to understand how the Obama Administration could possibly imagine that it can successfully mandate for all Americans compliance with a Rule that, consciously and

deliberately, goes against and contradicts well-known and firm moral teachings of America's largest religious body. Perhaps Sebelius calculates that many Catholics, like herself, no longer follow the Church's moral teaching, and hence can safely be depended upon to comply.

It is true that some states already mandate coverage of contraception and other anti-natalist methods in insurance policies, but none of these state laws seem to be as comprehensive as what is now being mandated under Obamacare. Moreover, the exceptions generally allowed under these state laws appear to be much broader than what is included in the new HHS Rule. Up to now, there have been some skirmishes over these laws, but there has not yet been a head-on social collision between the increasingly successful anti-natalists and those citizens, many of them Catholics, who cannot in conscience comply with these new practices and requirements.

However, the Obama Administration now seems headed toward just such a collision. Under the new HHS Rule, virtually everybody is now going to be involved, either through the insurance policies they will now be forced to buy, and/or through their taxes, in paying for sterilizations and contraceptives (including the abortion-inducing methods still dishonestly called contraceptives).

Will Catholics go along with this? Some perhaps will, since the real issues do not always get clearly presented and brought out; consciences get blunted; and many people really don't want to "fight."

Nevertheless, many knowledgeable Catholics and others will *not* be able to go along with what is now being contemplated and mandated under Obamacare. Among other things being done here is the fact that the Obama Administration is setting up a new source of *permanent social conflict* in American life. There still are people who *cannot* in conscience go along with what is being put in place here; they will *have* to resist and to

oppose the new mandate in whatever ways prove feasible. Nor should it be imagined that their numbers will necessarily be miniscule, given the moral outrage that the Obama Administration is perpetrating with its new Rule.

Moreover, there is still the Church herself. Does the Obama Administration really think the Catholic Church doesn't count? It would seem so. At any rate, Sebelius and her HHS colleagues are proceeding as if there were no Catholic Church out there. They will not be the first to fail to understand the Church and take her into account.

The Catholic Church, of course, is *not* a social action organization; the Catholic bishops are *not* politicians but pastors. Nevertheless, the Church *cannot* just let pass a rule such as this new HHS Rule mandating for all Americans methods and practices which the Church teaches are gravely immoral. Church leaders have already begun to react with vigor to this Rule and other Obama Administration measures such as those aiming to promote so-called same-sex "marriage." In October, 2011, the bishops' Conference established a new Religious Liberty Committee headed by Bishop William Lori of Bridgeport, Connecticut.

In the current era of increasing pro-life legislative victories around the country, of the defunding of Planned Parenthood in some places, of lawsuits challenging Obamacare, etc., the new HHS Rule may even prove to be short-lived, as a result of either Congressional or court action. If it does go into effect, however, one thing is certain: the Catholic Church will not remain passive. The Church *does count*!

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PRIESTS' RIGHTS MERIT VIGOROUS DEFENSE

When it comes to accusations of priestly sexual abuse, the accuser is never publicly identified—he is simply listed as John Doe. But this isn't enough to satisfy some: they want bishops to publish the names of all accused priests, even if there has never been a conviction, and even if the accused priest is dead. Moreover, every accused serial killer and maniacal terrorist merits immediate attention from civil libertarians, and their defense is applauded in liberal circles. Why should priests be treated any different?

The *Boston Globe* ran a huge front-page story recently taking Archbishop Sean O'Malley to task for not publishing the names of order priests who have been accused of abuse; as members of religious orders, they are not directly under his purview. By listing the names of accused diocesan priests, which he is not legally obliged to do, O'Malley made what he thought would be received as a goodwill gesture. Instead, the *Globe* saw blood in the water and went for the kill. Never once has this newspaper taken on the public school establishment, or any other religion, demanding the same outcome.

Because lawyers for Kansas City-St. Joseph Bishop Robert Finn agreed to a diversion—he will meet monthly with a local prosecutor in exchange for prosecution—some are saying it implies he is guilty of covering up for Fr. Shawn Ratigan. Yet Clay County prosecutor Dan White admitted, “I have the charge, but do I have conviction based upon the evidence I had?” Good point. Some said that Finn's lawyers were looking for loopholes in the child porn statutes. We hope they are—hopefully they will exploit every legal loophole there is.

It's time to level the playing field. Going beyond what the law requires should be taboo, and hiring only the toughest

lawyers money can buy should be the norm. To argue otherwise is to argue for injustice. Lay Catholics should be brazenly unapologetic.

BOGUS LAWSUIT IS HARD TO BEAT

No segment of the population has been inundated with more bogus lawsuits than Catholic priests. The latest one out of Rhode Island is hard to top.

A Pawtucket man said he was molested by a member of the New England Province of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart when he was in the seventh grade. But there are a few problems with his tale:

- the alleged abuse took place more than a half-century ago
- the alleged offender is dead
- the accuser never reported the offense to the authorities
- the accuser never contacted the religious order
- the school where this allegedly happened is closed
- the accuser says he never remembered the alleged abuse until he watched a TV show about molestation in 2008
- the accuser says the Penn State case has added to his pain
- the accuser says he doesn't trust people
- the accuser has been married seven times
- the accuser has had 82 jobs

His legal counsel, Mitchell Garabedian, is one of America's premier steeple-chasing lawyers; he is utterly shameless and has an embarrassing track record in court.

But one can look at the bright side: this case suggests that the haters of the Catholic Church are running out of "victims" to exploit.

PHILLY INQUIRER HAS DIRTY HANDS

In a recent column that appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, columnist Monica Yant Kinney blasted the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

She was furious over the decision by Philadelphia prosecutors to depose Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua at the seminary where he lives instead of in court; the former Archbishop of Philadelphia was asked to testify on alleged priestly sexual abuse that occurred during his tenure. Bevilacqua is 88 and in poor health, but none of that mattered to Kinney: she wanted him dragged into court to put an end to “the church’s chilling culture of secrecy.”

So we began to wonder, just how transparent is the *Inquirer* when it comes to its own dirty laundry? All we did was put “Philadelphia Inquirer and fired reporter” in a Google search, and guess what popped up? Stories about Paul Davies, a columnist at the newspaper who was allegedly fired in 2011 after he offended the big boys at the Philadelphia Convention Center.

Davies wrote a front-page piece (in the “Currents” section) on Sunday, March 6 that detailed what a taxpayer rip-off the financing of the Center was. On March 14, the *Inquirer* ran a letter by the chairman of the Center blasting the newspaper for scaring away business. Then a story appeared in the *Metropolis* maintaining that the Center axed a \$400,000 to \$500,000 advertisement campaign from the *Inquirer* in retaliation. That’s what led to Davies being dumped.

The *Inquirer* denies this account, but Davies says he was

escorted out the door by his boss; he even threatened to sue. Why mention all this? Because the newspaper has never admitted to its readers why Davies left, and still maintains that it is “company policy not to discuss personnel matters relative to former employees.” How convenient. So much for transparency. Looks like there is a “chilling culture of secrecy” at the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

PEOPLE FOR THE AMERICAN WAY IS GUTLESS

On November 18, Bill Donohue wrote to Michael B. Keegan, president of People For the American Way (PFAW), challenging him to a debate. This was done in response to Keegan’s challenge the day before to Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio: he invited DiMarzio to participate in a public forum on the issue of the Brooklyn Museum of Art’s “Hide/Seek” exhibition featuring a vile video of ants running all over Jesus on the Cross. Bishop DiMarzio had asked that the video not be included in the exhibition. Because we led the charge against the video last year when it was shown at the Smithsonian—it was pulled after we put public pressure on the museum—Donohue thought it only appropriate that Keegan debate him.

Donohue closed his letter by saying the following: “Please be advised that I am in a win-win situation and you are in a lose-lose. If you say yes, you will lose the debate. If you say no, I will tell the entire world.”

Ten days later, in the “Right Wing Watch” section of PFAW’s website, came the reply, written for Keegan by Josh Glasstetter. Here’s what was said:

“In fact, debating Donohue would be the lose-lose.” That’s right.

“Donohue is a press hound of the worst sort who feeds off contrived controversies.” Donohue replied, “Thanks to PFAW and their ilk, I don’t have to contrive anything.”

“It would be a mistake to provide any more oxygen to Donohue’s one-man challenge.” One-man? How do they know he wouldn’t bring an army?

Here’s their most manly statement of all: “In another century, a guy like Donohue might have challenged us to a duel.” Might have?

NFL GAMBLES WITH MADONNA

Recently, the National Football League (NFL) and NBC decided to invite pop star Madonna to perform at halftime during Super Bowl XLVI. This decision was announced almost two months after Bill Donohue wrote to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell asking him not to invite Madonna to perform. Below is a recap of Donohue’s October 11 letter:

In 2004, the NFL invited ‘N Sync’s JC Chasez to sing during the halftime of the Pro Bowl game. When Chasez said he was going to sing his latest single, “Some Girls (Dance with Women),” the NFL objected, citing the sexual lyrics that may offend viewers (at the time, the NFL was still receiving flak over the Justin Timberlake-Janet Jackson Super Bowl controversy). The NFL then asked Chasez to sing “Blowin’ Me Up (With Her Love)” instead. Chasez agreed to do so. Then the NFL decided that the singer had to drop the lyrics “horny” and “naughty” from the song. Again, Chasez acceded to the request.

The NFL then reconsidered the propriety of having Chazez sing altogether, and decided to withdraw the invitation (he was offered to sing the national anthem, but declined).

The NFL cannot expect Catholics to be treated any different. Chazez may be known for some dicey lyrics, but he is chopped meat compared to Madonna. For decades, Madonna has blatantly offended Christians, especially Catholics. The offensive lyrics, lewd behavior and misappropriation of sacred symbols are reason enough not to have her perform. Worse, she has repeatedly mocked the heart and soul of Christianity: Jesus, Our Blessed Mother, the Eucharist and the Crucifixion.

Goodell is gambling that Madonna will behave herself. If she doesn't, he's the one who will be in the hot seat. No matter, he's already shown a side of himself to Catholics that is disturbing.

PENN STATE ANALOGIES EVINCE A BIAS

Everyone has compared the Penn State sexual abuse scandal to that of the Catholic Church, and in many respects, such an analogy is warranted. That being said, some correctives are in order.

In the case of the Church, most of the problem took place between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s; almost all of the allegations being reported today extend back decades. Why not discuss Penn State's most salient rival, namely, the public schools? That's where "passing the trash"—moving molesting teachers to new school districts—is still a major problem.

Planned Parenthood is notorious for covering up cases of statutory rape, yet no one is fingering them. That's because they have the support of many in the media.

"Occupy Wall Street" gatherings are rife with sexual assault, and in Baltimore, the protesters were told, *by directive*, that "we do not encourage the involvement of the police in our community" about such matters. A protestor in New York said she knew of cases of rape but that "We don't tell anyone. We handle it internally."

Many blame "all male hierarchies" for the abuse. But recently the top Episcopal bishop in the U.S., a woman, was cited for welcoming a known child molester into the clergy. Also, why wasn't anyone talking about the Penn State issue as involving homosexuality? Male-on-male sex, involving mostly postpubescent guys, constituted most of the abuse. But everyone is afraid to mention the obvious.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH SELF-ABORTION?

Recently as a New York City superintendent was gathering the garbage, he felt something strange. It was a baby. "When I found the baby," he said, "I didn't know if it was real at first. It was so bad." Not surprisingly, it made him sick. "After what happened, I just stayed in my apartment for a while because I didn't feel well."

Two days later, a 20-year-old woman was arrested and charged with self-abortion in the first degree, a misdemeanor.

Andrea Miller of NARAL Pro-Choice was outraged. "They have

taken what should be a medical and public health matter and turned it into a criminal case,” she said.

Sonia Ossoria of the National Organization for Women agreed with Miller, saying, “It’s absolutely outlandish to charge her with self-abortion.”

So a woman kills her own baby, and the sole source of anger coming from the pro-abortion community is that she is being prosecuted. Not a word of sorrow about the dead baby.

In a perverse way, they may have a point: why is it criminally wrong to perform the exact same procedure that a well-paid doctor can do legally? If she is a monster, what does that make him? Moreover, had this same superintendent found a baby in the dumpster who had been dropped there by a Planned Parenthood worker, there would have been no prosecution.

Those running for president should be asked about this issue. How they answer this question would no doubt prove to be revealing.

CURBING CHOICE IN THE NAME OF CHOICE

The anti-Catholic group, Catholics for Choice, recently placed an ad on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*. We immediately issued a response.

“Choice” has no normative value absent an object, but even then it may carry no moral weight. Choosing chocolate over vanilla is a choice without moral consequence. But choosing to abort one’s baby clearly has consequences, both for the woman

and her child: for the woman, they are traumatic; for the baby, they are deadly.

No Catholic can support such a choice. Indeed, in this instance, the very name “Catholics for Choice” is an oxymoron.

Ironically, the Catholics for Choice advertisement focused exclusively on *limiting* the choices of Catholics: it asked President Obama to stand against the U.S. bishops by denying Catholic institutions the right to a religious exemption from healthcare services they cannot in good conscience countenance. The bishops have been on the frontlines of the religious freedom battle, yet Catholics for Choice wants to strip them of that right.

Here’s another irony: there really is no organization called Catholics for Choice. It has no members, and is in fact nothing more than a well-funded letterhead, sponsored by the establishment. Over the years, its biggest and most consistent donor has been the Ford Foundation.

One more irony: bigotry has always stained the Ford legacy. Henry Ford was a notorious anti-Semite, and today the Ford Foundation is the most generous donor of anti-Catholic causes. Indeed, the Ford Foundation is so busy working against Catholics that it funded the vile “ants-on-the-crucifix” video at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.