

INJUSTICE IN PHILADELPHIA

Recently in Philadelphia, two men, Father Charles Engelhardt and Bernard Shero, a parochial school teacher, were sentenced to prison for the rape of a minor. This is a story the Catholic League has been closely following for some time. When we here at the Catholic League first heard that a boy was allegedly raped by three different persons, two of whom were priests, we were immediately suspicious. After all, how many times in American history has anyone been raped three times by three different persons? The more we learned, however, the more we were convinced that “Billy Doe,” the alleged victim, was a congenital liar, school dropout, thief, and drug addict, a punk who sought to cash in on the prevailing animus against priests. It’s frighteningly easy to make charges against priests and others these days, and it’s frighteningly easier to make them stick in a court of law.

Father Engelhardt, whom no one has ever proved even met “Billy Doe,” was sentenced to six to twelve years in prison. Bernard Shero was hit with eight to sixteen years in prison.

Bill Donohue’s statement on this issue, which was submitted to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* as an advertisement, was turned down by the paper. It was quite a surprise. After all, it’s not every day that you see a failing metropolitan newspaper reject an ad that would have gained the paper \$58,000 (at a time when employees have already been laid off, *Inquirer* personnel surely can’t be happy about that), even when the contents make the paper look bad for not doing its job.

STATE DEPT. PEDOPHILIA COVER-UP?

At a June Senate Finance Committee, it was reported that the State Department found in 2010 that the majority of domestic victims enslaved in the sex industry are runaway and homeless youth. It was not said whether the child that was allegedly raped by the U.S. Ambassador to Belgium was homeless. Perhaps that is because the investigation into what Howard Gutman did was spiked by Patrick Kennedy, the Undersecretary of State for Management.

The State Department under Secretary of State Hillary Clinton seems to have been infinitely more concerned about punishing whistleblowers than pedophiles. Aurelia Fedensin, a former senior inspector general investigator at the State Department, said Gutman “routinely ditched his protective security detail in order to solicit sexual favors from both prostitutes and minor children.” Evidently, lots of people knew about it and did nothing. Gutman raised a half-million dollars for Obama in 2008 and helped finance his inaugural.

Worse, the Inspector General’s (IG) office compromised its independence by lying about the events: Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security, Eric Boswell, ordered reference to pedophilia deleted, and the IG acceded to the request. As for Fedensin, she was threatened with criminal charges, but nothing was done about the child rapist.

One State Department official said that investigations sometimes result in disciplinary actions that aren’t made public. If the State Department wants to punish its johns internally, that is of no interest to the Catholic League. But when priests are being removed from ministry for “boundary violations,” and bishops are being pressured to step down because they didn’t sufficiently supervise a former groping

priest, it is unconscionable— if these stories are true—that State Department higher-ups not be punished for refusing to contact the authorities about a suspected child rapist, and then engaging in a cover-up.

There has been a rash of stories about State Department employees taking drugs and cavorting with prostitutes. While all of these alleged crimes are reprehensible, the Catholic League only has interest in the charge that Gutman “routinely ditched his protective security detail in order to solicit sexual favors from *both* prostitutes and *minor children*.” (Our italics.)

No media outlet was more outraged over minors being molested by priests than the *Boston Globe*, but it has shown no interest in this story; it did not run a single piece on it. The *New York Times* ran one story; the *Washington Post* ran one story, but unlike the *Times*, it never mentioned “minor children”; the *Los Angeles Times*, like the *Globe*, ignored the story altogether.

Most disturbing was CBS News. It deserved credit for breaking the story, but what it did on June 11 was indefensible. Here is what it said: “One specific example mentioned in the [Inspector General’s] memo refers to the 2011 investigations into an ambassador who ‘routinely ditched...his protective security detail,’ and inspectors suspect this was in order to ‘solicit sexual favors from prostitutes.’”

Now compare the last sentence in the paragraph above to the italicized sentence quoted in the earlier paragraph. Missing is any reference to “minor children.” This was not a mistake: by excising reference to “minor children,” it demanded that the reporter also excise the word “both.” He did.

The media in general has shown an almost unethical amount of disinterest in this issue. What it really shows, in the long run, is that the criticism against the Church in particular is

in fact politically motivated.

In short, current allegations of child rape by government officials are far less interesting to the media than decades-old stories about priests. Let's face it: the media, as well as pundits (and "comedians" like Bill Maher), are not interested in kids. Their interest is in the identity of the offender.

FEDERAL AMENDMENT ON MARRIAGE NEEDED

When the Supreme Court reached decisions on the issue of same-sex marriage, Bill Donohue commented: "It is clear from today's two rulings that the ball has been moved down the field to a point where the pro-gay marriage side is in the red zone. Whether they can be stopped from crossing the goal line depends solely on the prospects of having a constitutional amendment affirming marriage as a union between a man and a woman."

The 38 states needed to pass such an amendment are not the problem—there are already 38 states that have their own laws restricting marriage to a man and a woman—the problem is getting two-thirds of the House and two-thirds of the Senate to agree.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops supports a federal marriage amendment. The Catholic League does as well.

LIES OF THE MAGDALENE LAUNDRIES

Bill Donohue's new booklet, *Myths of the Magdalene Laundries*, debunks the conventional wisdom about these Catholic-run facilities in Ireland. Based on the McAleese Report, the Irish government study released in February, it examines the origins of the many myths about the laundries.

Virtually all the horror stories that have been told—nuns cruelly torturing and sexually abusing “fallen” women—are lies. Worse, Irish officials, such as the current prime minister, Enda Kenny, continue to misinform the public, even in the face of indisputable evidence. Media outlets, the BBC and the *New York Times*, in particular, refuse to discuss the McAleese Report, leaving the impression that the falsehoods told by Peter Mullan in his propaganda film, “The Magdalene Sisters,” offer an accurate picture of what happened.

Copies have been distributed to the media, Irish historical societies, Irish fraternal and sororal groups, the clergy—including all the bishops—and those who made a donation to cover the costs of publishing and distributing the booklet.

Fair criticism of the Magdalene Laundries, or any other Catholic institution, isn't only acceptable, it's welcome. That's the only way progress can be made. But agitprop films, and agenda-driven activists and writers, must be challenged. The truth is that we've been lied to about the Magdalene Laundries, and it's time to set the record straight. Copies are available to the public for \$5 per booklet; please send to Catholic League, 450 7th Avenue, 34th floor, NY, NY 10123.

ATHEISTS IN SEARCH OF GOD

In late June, it seemed like the atheists were all the rage in the national media. No less than three separate stories covered the atheists' search for God and the fascination with religion (at least in its external aspects). It made for truly fascinating reading that at times bordered on the perplexing.

On June 22, CNN ran a piece on atheists in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a veritable religious wasteland, who meet on Sundays in a "rapt conversation" led by a "chaplain." Described as a "church without God," the poor souls are experiencing "Sunday school for atheists" at these "atheist services" and "atheist congregations."

On June 24, the *New York Times* reported that in Baton Rouge the godless ones meet on Sundays to experience "exhortations to service." There is "swinging and light swaying" at the "atheist service," complete with an "impassioned sermon" led by a "hard-line atheist."

On the front page of the June 25 "Metro" section in the *Washington Post*, there was a story about an "atheist" who started every day on his "knees" where he "lowers his forehead to the floor and prays to God." But was he really praying? "In a sense." Which means, not really. Yet he spoke about "God" and his "conversion," even attributing it to a "miracle." We also learn about "secular chaplains" at major universities and a British book titled *Religion for Atheists*.

Atheists say they reject God. It would be more accurate to say they try to reject God. Which is why atheists are really agnostics in a hurry.

Notice how they not only appropriate the lexicon of Christianity, they even choose Sundays for their "services." Why not Mondays? Why do they need a "chaplain"? What's with the "swaying"? Do they have second collections? Why are there

no books called *Atheism for the Religious*?

If someone were served a jelly donut without the jelly, he would feel robbed. Atheists feel robbed, too. Fortunately, it's not too late to put the jelly back. Now that would be something to sway about.

“NUNS ON THE BUS” ARE ROLLING AGAIN

When the “Nuns on the Bus” last rolled out of town the bus was almost empty: only two made the entire trip. Never were there more than seven on the (luxury) bus at any one time. Recently they began in Jersey City and will end their magical mystery tour in San Francisco. The gig is being funded by Organizing for Action (OFA).

Interestingly, OFA's website address is barackobama.com; it was set up earlier this year to implement the Obama agenda. While the nuns promote immigration reform, OFA advocates ObamaCare, a component of which is the anti-Catholic Health and Human Services Mandate.

But these nuns, who expressly eschew commenting on abortion, are not troubled by such matters.

OFA is a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization. Unlike conservative groups, it hasn't been subject to harassment. Small wonder. It also helps when a 501(c)(4) launches before applying for tax-exempt status; it has yet to do so. Also, it pledges to disclose the names of donors giving over \$250 on its website, on a quarterly basis. It's been in operation for over four months, but has yet to do so; it says it will make

these disclosures “in the near future.”

The “Nuns on the Bus” website lists a job opening for a Field Coordinator. Nowhere does the job description say anything about commitment to Catholic teachings. The word Catholic doesn’t even appear; the closest is a sentence about the “spiritual side” of the “Nuns on the Bus.” Here’s what it says: “On the spiritual side, we need someone who can keep our community as motivated as they were the day the bus rolled into town and to capture that motivation and turn it into action.” That’s as close as “Nuns on the Bus” are going to get about matters spiritual—never mind Catholic—taking action on behalf of Obama.

OBAMA’S OPPOSITION TO PLAN B FOLDS

The Obama administration decided not to contest a federal judge’s ruling that eliminates age restrictions on the “morning- after” pill known as Plan B.

On December 7, 2011, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius explained why the administration opposed the Food and Drug Administration’s recommendation that Plan B be made available without prescription to girls of all ages. “It is common knowledge that there are significant cognitive and behavioral differences between older adolescent girls and the youngest girls of reproductive age,” she said. President Barack Obama agreed, saying, “As the father of two daughters, I think it is important for us to make sure that we apply some common sense to various rules when it comes to over-the-counter medicine.”

So what happened to the “common knowledge” and “common sense” arguments? Why didn’t the administration appeal District Judge Edward Korman’s ruling? The issues are the same, both morally and medicinally.

What’s changed, of course, is the timing: the outcome of the presidential election is no longer in doubt.

It’s perverse. The same people promoting a highly eroticized popular culture promote Plan B as a panacea to adolescent sex. And yet nothing works to prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases better than restraint. But the elites have divined that restraint ought to apply to smoking (save marijuana), not sexuality.

HBO SHOULD LEARN FROM NBA

Bill Maher’s obsession with Catholicism was on display again recently. His joking around about the pope being an atheist crossed no lines, nor did his swipe at Jesus being a hippie. But he just can’t get through a conversation about the Catholic Church without getting dirty.

Guest Paul Rudnick, a homosexual playwright known for his filthy and anti-Catholic productions, quoted a Vatican official who said, “People who truly know the Catholic Church cannot be saved if they refuse to enter or remain in her.” Maher replied, “Remain in her?” To which Rudnick said, “Yeah, presumably without using a condom.”

Over the weekend, Indiana Pacers center Roy Hibbert apologized profusely for saying “no homo” (and an obscenity) in a news conference. The NBA did not consider his remorse sufficient: he was fined \$75,000.

Maher is a recidivist: his vulgar characterizations of priests, dating back decades, make him the most anti-Catholic bigot in the entertainment industry. But he pays no price for his bigotry. Time Warner (the parent company of HBO) knows all about his record—we recently sent its officials a detailed list of his Catholic-bashing remarks—and still does nothing.

Fining Maher for his speech would be absurd, but there are other things that could be done to get him to treat Catholics as if they were, say, gays. One thing is for sure: the NBA takes bigotry and obscenity seriously, which is more than we can say for HBO/Time Warner.

MYTHS ABOUT CHRISTIAN NON-PERSECUTION

Robert Royal

At the present moment, Christians are the most widely persecuted religious group in the world. They are forbidden normal freedom to practice or attacked for explicitly religious reasons in Muslim countries from Algeria across North Africa, throughout the Middle East, into Pakistan and Indonesia. In other countries, such as China, Christians of various kinds exist and even continue to grow in numbers, but are subject to political control intended to keep them from becoming a potential force for reform as they did in Poland, the Philippines, and Latin America in the twentieth century. The Chinese Communists are quite aware of the role Solidarity and John Paul II played in the fall of the Soviet Union, and that is one among several reasons they are determined to keep a lid on Christianity, even going so far as to establishing a

Patriotic Catholic Church to compete with the historic Catholicism in communion with Rome.

The motives for these persecutions—and sometimes outright martyrdom—vary, as you well might expect, depending on multiple factors. And there are several nations in the developed world that practice subtler forms of discriminations and government control: witness our own American government's misguided efforts to impose healthcare guidelines on religious institutions, which violate their settled moral principles. But the fact and scope of anti-Christian persecution is beyond all doubt. Non-partisan human rights organizations report on it, in detail, annually. And former French President Nicholas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel—neither exactly the kind of right-wing Christian extremist that the media love to mock—have both pronounced Christianity “the most persecuted religion in the world.”

Which makes it quite odd that Candida Moss, a professor at Notre Dame, has just published *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom*. In the main, her book deals with misconceptions about early persecution and martyrdom, but her real goal—beyond what is essentially a series of technical debates among scholars of the early Church—is to dispel a dangerous “myth,” as she would have it, which she claims is not merely “academic”:

The view that the history of Christianity is a history of unrelenting persecution persists in modern religious and political debate about what it means to be Christian. It creates a world in which Christians are under attack; it endorses political warfare rather than encouraging political discourse; and it legitimizes seeing those who disagree with us as our enemies. It is precisely because the myth of persecution continues to be so influential that it is imperative that we get the history right.

All those persecuted Christians around the world noted above

might think this a merely “academic” reading of their plight indeed. And to be fair to Professor Moss, her aim seems less to deny them than to block Christians in America from vigorous action to defend what they see as threats to their beliefs and institutions. She couches her point in a way that it would be difficult to disagree with. Christians should not believe that they have “always and everywhere,” “relentlessly,” and “constantly,” been suffering under persecution. That is simply not true, as she rightly argues. But outside of a rather slender sect of scholars – the kind that generally gathers impressions of what traditional Christians believe from the most extreme statements of a very few that are deliberately highlighted in the liberal media—who ever believed such a thing? The most rabid Christian culture warrior knows that the anti-Christians lay low or take a break now and then.

If Professor Moss were to extend her efforts at a generous understanding—which she so clearly wishes to do to contemporary Muslims and even ancient pagan figures—to the large numbers of Christians she’s actually living among, she might be surprised to find that they are not bent on “sacred violence,” don’t even have a jaundiced view of, say, Muslims as a whole. But they can read and think. And they know pretty well where the HHS mandates are headed or where something like the Boston bombings came from.

The latter wasn’t from Christian discrimination against Muslims—the Tsarnaev brothers had many American friends and did rather well here in academics and sports. It wasn’t from economic stress—the family pulled in hundreds of thousands of dollars for rent and food from Massachusetts’s welfare agencies. It was from an Islamist ideology of the sort that academic discourse or “dialogue” can do little to affect. The reason we even have police, FBI, military services, and intelligence agencies is precisely because some malefactors can only be stopped with the appropriate and justified use of force.

And even in domestic terms, are the Christians really the ones most to blame and most offending in today's culture clashes? Do we practice "sacred violence," which Dr. Moss sees in many places? And does a long "myth" of persecution play a significant role in whatever problem Professor Moss thinks she detects?

In fact, she has really tried to write two books that don't have much to do with one another.

In one, a trained scholar of early Christianity applies the historical/critical method developed over the past several centuries by Scripture scholars to raise doubts about the truth of all but a handful of early Christian martyrdom accounts. Like the use of this method in search of the "historical Jesus," the results largely reflect the presuppositions the writer brings to the task. Close reading of any text, even a formal legal filing, can be used to increase doubts about how it all fits together—if at all. Scholarly conclusions, therefore, are more often than not reserved and skeptical, not only as to the words and acts of early Christians, including Jesus, but about how the Church received the history, interpreted it, and passed it on.

In Professor Moss's other book, however, which is to say the one she has written in her opening and closing chapters along with a sprinkling of editorializing comments throughout, a trained scholar of early Christianity steps into current debates about the legal penalizing, sometimes bordering on persecution, that traditional Christians routinely suffer in modern societies. She isn't particularly well informed about this side of things—whether in this country or abroad—and has very little sympathy for those very fellow Christians who, rightly or wrongly, do very much feel—not without considerable evidence—that ominous developments are under way.

Professor Moss writes, she believes, from the highest motives: the wish to find common ground together, to work towards the

good of all across partisan and religious lines. But she, like many another liberal thinker, has all the proportions—outside the academy—simply wrong. You won't need to break a sweat looking for extreme statements by talk-radio hosts, politicians, the occasional bishop. But whereas Moss would extend the hand of liberal understanding to the most destructive of Muslim terrorists—we should understand why they want to do what they do to us—there's no similar sympathy to Americans, Christians, Westerners more generally who believe they are being wronged.

And it's hard not to believe that this bias warps more than one interpretation of the ancient material. For example, the "heretical" early Gnostics, Professor Moss assures us, never really existed as a "coherent movement." This is a very carefully formulated, almost lawyer-like scholarly assessment. But when it comes to the opponents' views—i.e., the reactions of traditional Christians who lived a lot closer to these Gnostic movements than any modern scholar—the judgment is much broader and "judgmental." The idea that the Gnostics presented serious threats were "the product of paranoid orthodox invective." How we know this after all this time is less clear than the doubts about embroidered stories of martyrdom. At the same time, despite their non-existence, we learn a few lines later that the Gnostics might be taken in some of their unorthodox texts such as the Gospel of Judas as examples of "a more moderate and reasonable form of ancient Christianity for post 9/11 Christians."

Say what? The early Christians no doubt editorialized in the martyr stories to make Christian points. But in many respects, whatever their editorial interventions, they were recounting something that their fellow Christians could have no trouble recognizing was plausible. Compared to their narratives, Professor Moss's transmuting of ancient literary material into fodder that can be put to use for contemporary political maneuvers borders on sheer invention. To ask an embarrassing

question, why exactly do we need to debunk stories of the early martyrs if all we're really after is trying to talk contemporary Christians out of the notion that they should engage in "dialogue" with anti-Christian culture and with the perpetrators of the recent wave of Islamist terrorism? Professor Moss presents no convincing case for linking the two, because there isn't one—not a good one, anyway.

Professor Moss is using some doubtful material about Christian persecution and martyrdom to do exactly what? Is the U. S. involved in drone-strikes, even under the liberal Obama Administration, because Christians are being persecuted and martyred in Pakistan (as they most certainly are)? No. Did we invade Afghanistan and drive out the Taliban because they persecuted Christians along with Hindus, Buddhists, and others? No. Do we bomb southern Somalia solely because it's persecuting and slaughtering Christians, which it is? No.

Some Christians might think these would all be justified use of force in humanitarian relief of a persecuted religious minority. But we haven't acted for those reasons and are unlikely to. So what are the reasons for these warnings about Christian self-righteousness and "sacred violence"?

She and her endorsers seem most to lament a lack of "compassion and dialogue today" because Christians are so self-righteous and so wedded to the notion that they are always and everywhere victims, that they are unwilling to talk with those with a differing faith and different view of the world. Everyone has to judge these complex questions with such lights as God grants, but is it really the case – outside some academic framing of our current situation – that our actively violent enemies want to talk and all we want to do is bomb, and that because we're martyrdom-obsessed Christians? There are myths of persecution and myths of a lack of persecution. Professor Moss has chosen to write a new chapter in the latter mold.

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