

POPE'S REMARKS ABOUT GAYS DISTORTED

Recently, Pope Francis made some remarks about gays while he was aboard the papal plane from Armenia to Rome. The following media outlets reported, either in the headline or in the story, that the pope recently said the Catholic Church owes gays an apology:

New York Times, AP, *Washington Post*, ABC News, CNN, *USA Today*, *New York Magazine*, Slate, NPR, *Daily Beast*, *Huffington Post*, BBC, *Daily Mail*, Reuters.

They are all wrong.

After the pope initially said, "I think that the Church must not only ask forgiveness...to the gay person who has been offended," he quickly clarified what he meant. He pointedly said that "when I say the Church, I mean Christians! The Church is holy, we are sinners."

In other words, the teachings of the Church are not the problem—the Church is "holy"—it is the words and deeds of those Christians who have sinned that is the problem.

Why is this important? The headline in a recent *New York Times* said it all: "Gay Catholic Groups Want Vatican to Act After Apology." This is a game: The media, led by the *New York Times*, misrepresented what the pope said, thus teeing it up for dissident and ex-Catholics to demand reforms. This is dishonest—the premise is false to begin with. The pope drew a distinction between the institution of the Church and the individuals who comprise it. Ergo, no action is required.

In most cases, both the news headline and the text of the story got it wrong. In some cases, the story correctly offered the pope's clarification, but the headline was wrong. No

matter, the public is being deceived and the truth is being distorted.

REACTION TO TERRORISTS VARIES BY RELIGION

It took three stories in the *New York Times* on Muslim killer Omar Mateen before he was identified as a Muslim. When Robert Dear killed three persons in a Planned Parenthood clinic last year, the first word in the *New York Times* headline was “Religion”; the reader quickly learned that Dear was Christian.

Thomas Sowell correctly pointed out that “no sooner had blood been spilled at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado than accusations of ‘Christian terrorism’ began to fly across the Internet,” despite the fact that there was no nexus between his religion and his crimes. Indeed, a CBS/AP story concluded, “Those who knew Dear said he seemed to have few religious or political leanings.”

There is a huge difference between Dear and Mateen. Dear’s three wives said he was never a practicing Christian. Moreover, there is no evidence that he ever belonged to a Christian congregation, or that he was ever involved in a Christian community.

Mateen bragged of his links to terrorist organizations, including Al Qaeda, and told his friends of his ties to the Boston bombers. He was known for frequenting a mosque attended by Al Qaeda operatives, and was twice investigated by the FBI.

Unlike Dear, Mateen was devout. He brought a prayer rug and

skullcap to work, praying on his knees during breaks. *He did not occasionally go to his local mosque—he went several times a week.* All of this makes it easy to understand why he called 911, just before he began his rampage, to express solidarity to the Islamic state.

The ACLU reacted to Mateen's killings by expressing "solidarity with the Muslim community." When Bill Donohue typed "ACLU expresses solidarity with the Catholic community" in the Yahoo search engine, up popped an article, "ACLU Lawyers Say Christians Caused the Orlando Shooting." It would be impossible to find a better example of rank bias than this.

POOL HOURS FOR (JEWISH) WOMEN ARE FAIR

Since the 1990s, a public swimming pool in an Hasidic community in Brooklyn has set aside a number of hours per week to allow women-only sessions. Recently, after one person complained, New York's Commission on Human Rights told the Parks Department that the policy was illegal. The policy was quickly reinstated after Assemblyman Dov Hikind protested; he was responding to complaints from Orthodox Jewish women. Now the policy is being reconsidered again. The Catholic League stands with Assemblyman Hikind.

Last year, in a Supreme Court religious accommodation case pitting the EEOC against Abercrombie & Fitch, Justice Antonin Scalia, writing for the Court, noted that Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act "does not demand mere neutrality with regard to religious practices...it gives them favored treatment." He added, "Title VII requires otherwise-neutral

policies to give way to the need for an accommodation.”

The word “accommodate” means “to provide room for (someone).” That’s what the women-only policy does—it provides room for the religious preferences of these Jewish women; setting aside single-sex pool hours allows them to abide by their modesty strictures. Furthermore, the EEOC says that laws should bend to afford religious accommodation unless they create “undue hardship.” There obviously isn’t any undue hardship—it took a quarter century for one anonymous person to complain.

One critic is quoted as saying that the Hasidic community has “a standard of modesty and decorum the rest of the culture doesn’t share,” and he doesn’t want “to change [his] attire to accommodate them.” That’s just the point: Those who don’t share the dominant culture’s mores should not have to lose their religious rights when reasonable accommodations can be granted. The requested pool hours are entirely reasonable.

Catholics should stand with Orthodox Jews in demanding religious accommodation. The principle is too critical for people of all faiths not to defend.

“FEELINGS” GOVERN TRANSGENDER POLICIES

The following article by Bill Donohue was recently published by Newsmax.

Looks like old Descartes got it wrong. “Cogito ergo sum,” or, “I think therefore I am,” has been superseded by “Sentio ergo sum,” or, “I feel therefore I am.” Welcome to the post-Oprah world of feelings.

“Follow your feelings. If it feels right, move forward. If it doesn’t feel right, don’t do it.” That’s what Oprah told the 2008 graduates at Stanford. “And how do you know when you’re doing something right? How do you know that? It feels so. What I know is that feelings are really your GPS system for life.”

Rachel Dolezal, a blue-eyed blond, recently admitted that she felt she was an African American. Accordingly, she told the world she was as black as Oprah. She explained that “from a very young age [I] felt a spiritual, visceral, this feeling of central connection with ‘black is beautiful.’”

After her white parents said she was a white woman pretending to be black, Dolezal responded in vintage Oprah terms. “I do not feel like they are my mom and dad.”

Race, of course, is not a matter of feelings, or even volition: it is a matter of biology. Though it is contentious in some quarters to say so, we don’t choose our race any more than we choose our sex.

However, in today’s world of “Sentio ergo sum,” we are now being taught that a man can choose to be a woman—if he feels like it—and vice versa. All that is necessary for someone to belong to the opposite sex is to feel that he or she belongs to it, and bingo, it’s a done deal.

The Obama administration has not only bought into this new round of sexual subjectivism, it is demanding that educators get in line. In its May 13 letter to the public schools across the nation, the Department of Justice defined gender identity as “an individual’s internal sense of gender.”

Thus did the DOJ award feelings a privileged position over reason. That schools would be expected to honor feelings over reason is one of the most overlooked aspects of this bizarre chapter in recent American history. We might expect therapeutic institutes to promote this view, but not educational entities.

In keeping with the Obama administration's penchant for power, there were no public debates or hearings on this subject—just decree. Vanita Gupta, who leads the Justice Department's civil rights division, didn't think dialogue, or the presentation of evidence, was necessary to adopt a new policy.

She argued that it was enough that transgender public employees may "feel afraid and stigmatized on the job." Similarly, there are students who "feel like their campus treats them differently because of who they are," as well as those who have been made to "feel inferior."

It looks like her politics of feelings is winning. A female teacher in Oregon who feels she is a man just won \$60,000 for claiming she was harassed on the job. Never mind that an internal investigation found no proof of harassment, or that this person no longer considers herself a man—she now prefers to be known as "transmasculine" and "genderqueen."

To the uninitiated, those terms are just some of the labels that have become available for self-identification in New York City: there are now 31 officially recognized genders in the Big Apple, making references to "guys and gals" seem quaint, if not bigoted.

Only 0.3 percent of Americans reject their sex as determined at birth (the Obama administration uses the term "assigned" at birth); the rest of us are comfortable with being a man or a woman. To be sure, every human being deserves to be afforded human dignity, but nothing demands that we suspend the faculty of reason to decide public policy.

Facts can be stubborn, and this is especially true of biological facts. XY = Male; XX = Female. Men determine the sex of the child—women never do. A man who feels he is a woman can never menstruate or get pregnant. That's just the way it is. Chalk it up to nature, and nature's God.

The American College of Pediatricians recently said, "No one

is born with a gender. Everyone is born with a biological sex.” Gender roles, as sociologists instruct, are socially learned ways of behaving that are deemed appropriate for boys and girls. That they take their cues from nature is indisputable.

For example, in every society—there are no exceptions—men are more aggressive than women. This is not a function of culture, but of biology. To be specific, men have more testosterone than women. It has nothing to do with “feelings,” but with certain biological imperatives.

The Department of Justice cannot alter nature, and it cannot decide by edict that the sexes are interchangeable. There is a limit to rule by feelings. At some point, reason is bound to kick in.

“JESUS’ WIFE” HOAX VERIFIED

The following article written by Bill Donohue was recently published by CNSNews.com.

In 2012, Harvard professor Karen L. King told the world that we need to rethink Jesus’ alleged celibacy. In all likelihood, she concluded, Jesus had a wife.

Her evidence? She was in possession of a fragment of papyrus that was inscribed with the words, “Jesus said to them, ‘My wife....’” In 2014, her article on this subject, “Gospel of Jesus’s Wife,” was published in the esteemed *Harvard Theological Review*. Now she reluctantly concedes that her finding is a forgery.

She really didn’t have much choice. The July/August edition of

the *Atlantic* magazine offers an investigative account on the owner of the papyrus, Walter Fritz: The man is a fraud, and so is his “evidence.”

Right from the get-go, there were several notable observers who smelled a rat. Among those not fooled was the Vatican. Right after King floated her story about Jesus’ wife, the Vatican newspaper, *L’Osservatore Romano*, labeled her tiny swath of papyrus an “inept forgery.” The newspaper’s editor, Gian Maria Vian, dismissed it as “a fake.”

When King went public in 2012 about her finding, she was cock-sure that she was right. Jesus’ reference to “My wife,” she said, was so clear that those words “can mean nothing else.” She also boasted that “this is the first unequivocal statement we have that claims Jesus had a wife.” When asked if ink tests may yet prove her papyrus scrap a fraud, she replied that more likely the tests “will be the cherry on the cake.”

As it turns out, there is no cake, never mind a cherry. What we have is a mess—one that she created. King showed her arrogance again when she asserted that her little fragment rose to the level of an “unequivocal statement.” If it were “unequivocal,” she wouldn’t be walking back her remarkable claims.

Moreover, her conclusion that the words “My wife” are not open to interpretation is rather curious coming from an academic: higher education these days denies the existence of truth, subjecting the plain words of a text to constant deconstruction. So why, all of a sudden, should her account be considered definitive?

King is not the only one to eat crow about her Jesus’ wife story. Roger Bagnall teaches at New York University’s Institute for the Study of the Ancient World. In 2012, after looking at the images of the papyrus with his colleagues, he said, “we were unanimous in believing, yes, this was OK.” He

was confident it was not a forgery. “You’d have to be really kind of perversely skilled to produce something like this as a fake.”

Bagnall was duped. So was Princeton’s AnneMarie Luijendijk, a professor of religion (King served on her doctoral dissertation committee). She dug herself in deep when she exclaimed, “It would be impossible to forge.” Does she now believe in miracles?

Gnostic gospel scholar Elaine Pagels, who had previously collaborated with King on a book, told Ariel Sabar, the author of the *Atlantic* article, that “she had little doubt about the authenticity of the papyrus King had studied.” But how would she know? This is the same Princeton professor of religion who does not believe in the Virgin Mary, the Resurrection, and other central tenets of Christianity, but expects us to put our faith in her opinion.

When King’s “ground-breaking” story surfaced, I was more than skeptical—I was cynical. Admittedly, my New York University doctorate in sociology yields no expertise in this area. But there was sufficient grounds, right from the start, to be dismissive.

Here is what I wrote on September 19, 2012, the day the story broke in the *New York Times*: “We know nothing about when the scrap [of papyrus] was discovered. We know nothing about where it was discovered. We know nothing about how it was discovered. We know nothing about the context in which the words were written. And we know nothing about the owner.”

These were not the only reasons I had to be suspicious. On the same day, after doing some quick research on King, I wrote the following: “King is known for her fertile imagination. For example, she previously claimed that Mary Magdalene was one of the apostles. Even better, in the book in which she made this extraordinary claim, she ‘rejects his [Jesus’] suffering and

death as the path to eternal life.' Not much after that."

I concluded, "So after first inventing an apostle for Jesus—who the *divinity* professor says is not the Savior—King has invented a wife for him. Her generosity, if not her scholarship, is beyond dispute."

One does not have to hold a Ph.D. in any discipline to wonder why the media, and some academics, were popping the champagne. It is not hard to figure out why: they were ideologically predisposed to (a) believing King's account and (b) rejecting the biblical one. This is not a matter of conjecture.

As soon as King's fable was announced, she exposed her agenda. Her work, she said, casts doubt "on the whole Catholic claim of a celibate priesthood based on Jesus' celibacy. They always say, 'This is the tradition, this is the tradition.' Now we see that this alternative tradition has been silenced."

This is nonsense. No one was silenced, and she knows it. Why didn't she name names? Who was silenced? Who did the silencing? Where is the evidence?

Laurie Goodstein, religion reporter for the New York Times, was salivating at the prospect that King was right. In her 2012 story on King's finding, she opined that "the discovery could reignite the debate over whether Jesus was married, whether Mary Magdalene was his wife and whether he had a female disciple."

This is particularly relevant today, she said, because "global Christianity is roiling over the place of women in ministry and the boundaries of marriage."

Goodstein then focused on her favorite target, Catholicism. "The discussion is particularly animated in the Roman Catholic Church, where despite calls for change, the Vatican has reiterated the teaching that the priesthood cannot be opened to women and married men because of the model set by Jesus."

More nonsense. The only ones clamoring for such a change are dissidents, ex-Catholics, and their allies in the media, the *New York Times* being chief among them.

The most recent proof of the media-harbored agenda was provided by the *Washington Post*. After acknowledging that King's finding is a fake, reporter Ben Guarino said that if the scrap were real, it "could shatter one of the long-held tenets of Christianity." He then gave away the store when he noted that the 2012 announcement "was initially greeted with applause."

Guarino is correct, but he never explained why. It is hardly a leap of faith to conclude that those who reject the biblical account were applauding the prospect that it is factually wrong. Why? Because of the implications for ordaining women. That's what this is all about—women priests. Science is not driving this debate, politics is.

Only a few weeks after the *Harvard Theological Review* printed King's story in 2014, serious questions were raised about the authenticity of her fragment. King conceded that the young man who raised the forgery issue, Christian Askeland (he was not the first to do so), may be on to something, though she hastened to say, "I don't think it's a done deal." Earlier, Leo Depuydt, a professor of Egyptology at Brown University, said her finding was so fake that it "seems ripe for a Monty Python sketch."

Looks like Depuydt's instincts were right. The *Atlantic* article has sent King reeling.

Sabar's meticulous investigation showed the kind of determination to get at the truth that King never demonstrated. His real catch was the man who gave her the scrap, Walter Fritz. It wasn't easy, but Sabar hunted him down. He pressed Fritz about the way in which he acquired the papyrus, and found there were too many inconsistencies. He

also found problems with a document that Fritz said verified the fragment's authenticity.

Sabar researched Fritz's background, and interviewed him at length. He found him to be quite a rogue—on many issues—though not without considerable talents. In fact, he was no rookie to the subject: he studied Coptic at Berlin's Free University's Egyptology institute.

"By every indication," Sabar writes, "Fritz had the skills and knowledge to forge the Jesus's wife papyrus." In fact, "He was the missing link between all the players in the provenance story."

"I asked Fritz whether there was anyone alive who could vouch for any part of the provenance story," Sabar wrote. "Did he have a single corroborating source to whom he could refer me?" Fritz replied, "I don't know. It's very unfortunate." Sabar explores several possible motives he may have had, but none that proves conclusive.

One thing is for sure: Fritz's rejection of truth made it easier for him to lie. "The truth is not absolute. The truth depends on perspectives, surroundings."

So what did King know about Fritz? Practically nothing. He told her that he was just a "family man." Not exactly—he was a pornographer. But not of the ordinary kind.

"Beginning in 2003," Sabar writes, "Fritz had launched a series of pornographic sites that showcased his wife having sex with other men—often more than one at a time. One home page billed her as 'America's #1 Slut Wife.'" Oh yes, his "Slut Wife" was also known for channeling the voices of angels.

Stung but not shamed, King is now equivocating about her "unequivocal" finding. She says, "based on the new evidence, I'm leaning toward modern forgery." How long it will take her

to stand up straight is anyone's guess.

If a seasoned journalist could conclude that Fritz was a fraud, why couldn't a Harvard professor? "I had no idea about this guy, obviously," she now says. "He lied to me."

Why was she so incurious? Because of the scrap's political implications? And why did Fritz choose her to pawn his "discovery"? Because he knew he would find a gullible taker? This is worthy of a "60 Minutes" investigation, but it will never happen: they might have to credit the Vatican for being right all along.

Harvard is standing by King, even though her incompetence is stunning. Moreover, the peer-reviewed *Harvard Theological Review* refuses to print a retraction, something King readily agrees with. "I don't see anything to retract," she says. "I have always thought of scholarship as a conversation."

I guess we live in different universes. My years as a college professor were not spent pursuing a conversation—that's what pubs are for—they were spent pursuing truth. But then again I didn't teach at Harvard.

The media were all over King's "discovery" in 2012: 128 newspapers covered it, and the *New York Times* ran its story on the front page. Now that King has been shown to be a JV player, the big media have shown little interest in reporting the forgery. As for the *Times*, there has been no story. And this is the "newspaper of record"?

When King initially presented her finding, she said, "This is not a career maker. If it's a forgery, it's a career breaker." She was half right: It is a forgery, but it's not a career breaker. As her most searing critic, Leo Depuydt, wryly noted, "I see King is still at Harvard. Unbelievable."