

PASTOR HAGEE APOLOGIZES; DONOHUE-HAGEE MEET

In a letter to Bill Donohue dated May 12 ([click here](#)), Pastor John Hagee apologized for offending Catholics. "I want to express my deep regret," he said, "for any comments that Catholics have found hurtful." Donohue was quick to accept the apology. On May 15, the two men met at Catholic League headquarters for the first time.

Hagee's letter effectively ends the dispute the two men have had. The controversy started after Pastor Hagee endorsed Sen. John McCain for president. The Catholic League has long objected to some of Hagee's comments about the Catholic Church, especially in relation to its dealings with Jews. That is why the league was critical of McCain's embrace of Hagee. McCain subsequently distanced himself from Hagee's objectionable remarks about Catholicism.

"After weeks of meeting with various Catholic leaders, and accessing scholarly literature on Catholic-Jewish relations," Donohue told the media, "Pastor John Hagee has demonstrated an improved understanding of the Catholic Church and its history." We were particularly pleased to see Hagee pledge "to provide a more complete and balanced portrayal going forward that will not reinforce mischaracterizations of the Catholic Church."

Hagee made it clear that his invocation of terms like "apostate church" and the "great whore" were never meant by him to describe the Catholic Church. However, he acknowledges that anti-Catholics have long employed such language.

Donohue praised Hagee's for his candor: "The tone of Hagee's letter is sincere. He wants reconciliation and he has achieved it. Indeed, the Catholic League welcomes his apology. What

Hagee has done takes courage and quite frankly I never expected him to demonstrate such sensitivity to our concerns. But he has done just that.”

It is a tribute to Catholics such as Deal Hudson of InsideCatholic.com that they succeeded in sitting down with Pastor Hagee over a period of weeks trying to bring about reconciliation. Hagee was able to access books he never read before, e.g., works by Martin Gilbert and Rabbi David Dalin that detail the heroic role of Pope Pius XII in rescuing Jews during the Holocaust. These were the kinds of things that moved Hagee to write his letter to Donohue.

It is now hoped that traditional Catholics and evangelical Protestants will be able to work together more effectively on those moral issues where they find common ground: abortion, embryonic stem cell research and doctor-assisted suicide. It is a sure bet that this alliance will continue to gel.

OBAMA CONTROVERSY

When Sen. Barack Obama recently announced the formation of his Catholic National Advisory Council, he said he was “deeply honored to have the support and counsel of these committed Catholic leaders, scholars and advocates.” We quickly urged him “to dissolve it immediately.”

Of the 26 Catholic former or current public office holders listed as either National Co-Chairs (5), or as members of the National Leadership Committee (21), not one of them agrees with the Catholic Church on all three of the following public policy issues: abortion, embryonic stem cell research and school vouchers.

Indeed, on the issue of abortion, their record is disgraceful. Consider the scorecard as issued by the most radical pro-abortion organization in the nation—NARAL. Of the two National Co-Chairs who have a NARAL tally, one agrees with the extremist group 65 percent of the time and the other agrees 100 percent of the time. Similarly, of the 20 National Leadership Committee members with a NARAL score, 17 have earned a 100 percent rating. Of those who have less than a perfect score, not one is in favor of school vouchers.

“Practicing Catholics have every right to be insulted by Obama’s advisory group,” we said. We continued, “What is the purpose of having an advisory group about matters Catholic when most of its members reject the Catholic position?” Indeed, we said, “to choose Catholic dissidents to advise him about Catholic concerns is mind-boggling.”

INTERNET PLUSES AND MINUSES

William A. Donohue

Libel laws in this country divide the population in two: private persons and public persons. Following *New York Times v. Sullivan* in 1964, the former category is entitled to plenty of protection while the latter is not. In other words, if someone smears the average person, he or she can sue and has a good chance of winning. If someone smears me, I have to prove that the offender knew that what he was saying was false when he said it and that he had malicious intent. In other words, good luck.

Is this fair? Probably. After all, if free speech is to be prized, then those who hate me need to be protected in exercising their free speech rights. I am, after all, a public

person. Imagine what it would be like if every time you wrote something about some public person whom you can't stand you had to worry about being sued. You'd likely shut up. The loser, then, would be free speech.

Having granted all this, even though people have a legal right to bash me, no one has a moral right to misrepresent me. And this happens all the time, especially lately. Why especially lately? Because we are all over the place—TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, the Internet—we are riding high. And while our fans love it, our adversaries do not.

The Internet is a medium that can be used or abused. For researchers like me, I love it. But I also know that the quality, in terms of accuracy, ranges from A-Z. An undiscerning user can easily be misled, the results of which can be far reaching.

Recently, there has been a spew of articles, investigative reports, blog stories and immense chatter about the Catholic League. In one such instance, a pro-abortion group got a generous grant from an elite foundation to do a hit job on me. They looked for dirt but couldn't find any. So what did I do? I wrote them a letter correcting their typos.

Those who write on obscure blog sites don't bother me because only idiots would cite them as a credible source. But when the *Washington Post* allows bloggers to attack me with abandon, that's another thing altogether. So it was with Anthony Stevens-Arroyo who wrote "Catholic League Shenanigans" on May 16.

Here is how he starts: "The Catholic League is not the 'All Catholic' League. It is not official Catholicism: still less does it speak for each and every one of the nation's 60 million Catholics."

That's right, the Vatican is the "All Catholic" League and we never claimed to represent "each and every one of the nation's

60 million [we're actually closer to 70 million, but never mind] Catholics." But I hasten to add that the Catholic League is listed in the *Official Catholic Directory* and is not, therefore, some wayward organization that goes about willy nilly slapping the name Catholic on its masthead.

The next part is priceless. "As someone who once endeavored to work with the League, I was disappointed to learn that it is run out of a single office by a single ego. So while I find newsworthy the recent exchanges between the League's president, Bill Donahue [sic] and Evangelical pastor, John Hagee, they don't amount to dogma."

I asked our staff if anyone had ever heard of this guy, and no one had. So I take it that when he says he "endeavored" to work here, what he really means is that he didn't get an interview. Perhaps that's because he can't spell my name. In any event, it is true that we don't have multiple offices, but it is not fair to say that our office has just one ego—there are ten others. All of whom can spell my name.

Stevens-Arroyo questions why the Catholic League "waited until February of 2008 to become angered by Hagee's career of bigotry over two decades?" He says it is because February was when Hagee endorsed McCain.

Now if he had bothered to read our website, he would have learned that I first wrote to Hagee in 1997. Therefore, the answer he supplies to his own question implodes. But this is small potatoes compared to this gem: "The Catholic League demanded the dissolving of Obama's Catholic support committee, accusing all of the members of disloyalty to the faith and labeling the actions of the Democratic Senator as 'Hitlerian.'"

In actual fact, I never made such an accusation. What I did was to report on the NARAL voting record of those members of Obama's advisory group who were, or currently are, public

office holders. And I never labeled “the actions” of Obama “Hitlerian.” What I said is that Obama made a “Hitlerian decision” when he voted to allow a baby who survives an abortion to die without attending medicinal care. I stand by that accusation.

Stevens-Arroyo makes a desperate, and failed, attempt to equate abortion with “major Catholic teachings like forgiveness of Third World debt” and other related issues. But there is no Catholic teaching on this subject, nor is there a listing for it (unlike abortion) in the Catholic Catechism.

So continue to use the Internet, but beware of the charlatans, demagogues and liars who populate it.

DONOHUE AND HAGEE MEET

The following article was written by Deal Hudson, the publisher of the website, InsideCatholic. It first appeared on CatholicOnline on May 16 and is reprinted here with permission. Hudson, who attended the May 15 meeting with Bill Donohue and Pastor Hagee (along with Hagee’s wife and his associate, David Brog), recounts here what happened.

Today at 3:30 pm I had the pleasure of introducing Rev. John Hagee to Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League, at Donohue’s office in Manhattan.

Pastor Hagee was in town for an evening speech at the United Nations on Israel and asked if I would introduce him to Donohue.

With Hagee was his wife Diana, who plays a significant role in the ministry of his church, and David Brog, executive director

of Christians United for Israel.

As Rev. Hagee entered the office and started meeting people, I heard Donohue's booming voice from around the corner, "I hear a Southern accent, it must be Pastor Hagee!"

Hagee, I could tell, wasn't quite expecting that kind of smiling, gregarious welcome. I had told Hagee that he and Donohue would hit off, but I don't think he really believed me. They did, in fact, hit it off and in a big way.

Donohue took the Hagees, Brog, and I into the library and showed them the view of the city from the 34th floor of his offices at 7th Ave. and 34th St. Then he invited all the staff of the Catholic League to meet the Hagees. The mood was jovial, warm, and welcoming. Any shadow of tentativeness on the Hagee's faces immediately vanished.

We went into Donohue's office for our chat, but first he showed the Hagees the window through which he saw the World Trade Center Towers fall to the ground on 9/11. He told the story of taking his staff to a local pizza restaurant where they prayed together, with the result that some Jews seated nearby asked if they could join in.

The conversation lasted about 45 minutes—Hagee had to get back to the UN for his evening speech. During that time Hagee and Donohue affirmed not only the reconciliation but also their future partnership on matters of importance to both them: life, marriage, family, and support for Israel.

Donohue said, "Pastor, you are my friend from this point forward and nothing's going to change that. We have our theological differences but we Catholics and Evangelicals need to work together—that is the liberals' worst nightmare."

The Hagees couldn't have agreed more with Donohue, and they talked at length about getting more Catholic support for Christians United for Israel. Donohue made it clear he shared

their concern for supporting and defending the existence of Israel against Islamic extremism.

Hagee rose to leave, and he held out his hands and said “Let us pray.” We prayed in the style I learned as a Southern Baptist growing up in Texas. It’s amazing how quickly it all came back to me as we prayed for unity among ourselves and for charity in all that we do.

As we were leaving, a reporter from the *San Antonio Express-News* called Donohue for an interview. Donohue did the interview as we stood there. It was obvious that Donohue’s report on the meeting was not what the reporter wanted to hear. When the reporter asked if Donohue was trying to help John McCain, I thought the answer was unassailable: “If I am trying to help John McCain why would I have called Rev. Hagee anti-Catholic in the first place?”

What can you say to that? The answer is “nothing.”

The meeting of John Hagee and Bill Donohue may have started something that will create important repercussions in the months and years to come.

CATHOLICISM’S MELTING POT

The following is an excerpt from Sam Roberts during the weekly New York Times podcast, “Only in New York.” The podcast ran on May 15:

“William Donohue’s calendar the other day was bookended by two historic events.

“Donohue is the president of the Catholic League for Civil and Religious Rights in Manhattan. Earlier in the day, he was

scheduled to meet for the first time with the televangelist John Hagee, who had finally apologized for remarks that, he admitted, Catholics had 'found hurtful.' Hagee insisted that when he bandied about epithets like 'the great whore' he wasn't referring to the Catholic Church...

"That night, Donohue planned to attend the opening of an exhibition celebrating the bicentennial of the Archdiocese of New York. It's billed as the first to celebrate the common Catholicism of diverse ethnic groups.

“The juxtaposition of the two events raised an obvious question: Just how much progress have Catholics made in the 200 years since they were reviled and repressed by New York’s nativist majority?

“That question is addressed by the exhibit at the Museum of the City of New York and a companion book, *Catholics in New York*, published by Fordham University Press with essays by Terry Golway, Pete Hamill, the *Times*’s Dan Barry, by William Donohue—recalling his tenure at a Catholic school in East Harlem that since closed because of declining enrollment—and by the novelist Peter Quinn.”

OBAMA 'S CATHOLIC ADVISORS—DONOHUE 'S REPLY

The initial controversy over Sen. Barack Obama's Catholic advisors is addressed in the *Catalyst* article, which can be accessed by clicking [here](#). The group's response can be found by clicking [here](#). Please see Bill Donohue's rejoinder below.

"The reason I mentioned only public officials who are part of

Sen. Obama's Catholic National Advisory Council is the same reason I chose just three public policy issues: voting tallies are available on these advisors (but not on the others) and on these three issues. If I knew more about the others, no doubt some would have made the cut.

"It is more than embarrassing—it is shocking—to read how these Catholics view abortion. The Catholic Church regards abortion, as well as embryonic stem cell research, as 'intrinsically evil.' But not these folks. For them, abortion is merely 'a profound moral issue.'

"Sadly, it has been apparent for years that many who fancy themselves 'progressive' Catholics do not treat abortion the way they do racial discrimination. No one in his right mind says that the best way to combat racial discrimination is by changing people's hearts and minds, not the law. Which is why we do both. But when it comes to abortion—including partial-birth abortion—the progressives settle for dialogue.

"It is so nice to know that Obama thinks abortion 'presents a profound moral challenge.' Is infanticide another 'profound moral challenge'? To wit: When he was in the Illinois state senate he led the fight to deny health care to babies born alive who survived an abortion. That, my friends, is not a moral challenge—it's a Hitlerian decision."

OBAMA CATHOLIC ADVISOR CENSURED

No sooner had Barack Obama's Catholic National Advisory Council written to Bill Donohue than Kansas City Archbishop Joseph Naumann censured one of Obama's National Co-Chairs,

Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius.

The Archbishop stated that the governor should not present herself for Holy Communion due to her long-time support of abortion rights. Gov. Sebelius' support for abortion can be seen in her recent veto of the Comprehensive Abortion Reform Act, which indicated "the governor does not approve of legislators devoting energy to protecting children and women by making it possible to enforce existing Kansas law regarding late-term abortions." Archbishop Naumann also pointed out that Sebelius has accepted campaign contributions from Dr. George Tiller, the notorious late-term abortionist.

It is telling that the presidential hopeful chose Gov. Sebelius to advise him on matters Catholic. For him to choose a Catholic politician who so disregards the Church's respect for life speaks volumes about his intentions for this council.

DOBBS PRAISES POPE

As we reported in the May *Catalyst*, Lou Dobbs criticized the pope during his recent visit to the United States. In a turn of events, right before our journal hit the press, Dobbs praised the pope on his CNN show. After blasting the pope for a few days, Dobbs had finally come to grips that the pope's message was one to be heard.

On the April 21 "Lou Dobbs Tonight," Dobbs hosted a panel discussion about the pope's visit that had ended the day before. While the panelists Robert Zimmerman and Ed Rollins were fair to the Holy Father, the biggest surprise came from Dobbs himself. The following is an excerpt from the discussion:

Rollins: “I thought the pope saying illegals should be treated in a humane way is not saying that they should stay here. I think he’s basically saying you shouldn’t mistreat them when they are here. Send them home, but don’t mistreat them.”

Dobbs: “You know, I could sign on with that... We’re going to have to take all this in. I like Pope Benedict XVI, is what [the conversation] just taught me here... By the way, I can close this out with one thing. He [the pope] changed the minds of a lot of priests around the country I believe.”

Needless to say, we were extremely pleased with this outcome. In a news release the following day, Bill Donohue had this to say:

“To his credit, last night Lou Dobbs pivoted away from his previous remarks about the pope and conducted himself in a most professional manner. What cannot be picked up from the transcript was the sincerity of his comments. In doing so, he put to rest any concerns we may have had. This case is closed.”

A few days later Donohue was a guest on Dobbs’ radio show where the two discussed the overall success of the papal visit. Donohue clarified the illegal immigration issue that had come under fire. Donohue noted that during his visit, Pope Benedict XVI never mentioned illegal immigration, but addressed immigration in general. In the end, the interview proved to be a fruitful exchange.

Once again our persistence paid off. By hitting Dobbs hard, we helped him realize that the pope was preaching a peaceful message during his visit.

MEDIA WATCHDOG SMEARS POPE

Following the successful visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United States, the media watchdog group Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) ran a story titled, "Pope Gets Pass on Church Abuse History." The self-styled "progressive" organization claimed that during his reign as pontiff, the pope has been given a pass on his "record of downplaying the [sex abuse scandal]." We pressed FAIR hard to provide us evidence to substantiate its claims of Benedict's alleged cover-up and they came up empty.

FAIR claimed that in 2001, before he was named pope, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger "sent a letter to church bishops invoking a 1962 doctrine threatening automatic excommunication for any Catholic official who discussed abuse cases outside the Church's legal system." The group cited an English newspaper, the *Observer* to back up its claims. When we told FAIR that the newspaper's interpretation of Ratzinger's letter was flat-out wrong, the organization asked us if the newspaper ran a correction. So that was the level of scrutiny FAIR employed: It did no fact checking of its own, instead it relied on foreign sources to verify its accusations.

As soon as we saw FAIR's report, we knew that they had been sucked into the lie that Cardinal Ratzinger attempted to cover up the sex abuse scandal. This wasn't the first time we found ourselves fighting these allegations. In 2003, Bill Donohue took CBS Evening News apart when they flagged the allegedly incriminating 1962 Vatican document. As we noted then, there was no other mainstream media outlet that picked up this bogus story. For good reason.

The document in question, "On the Matter of Proceeding in Cases of Solicitations," did not apply to sexual misconduct—it applied only to sexual solicitation that might take place in the confessional. By sexual solicitation it meant "whether by

words or signs or nods of the head,” the priest may have crossed the line. Because the policy was specifically aimed at protecting the secrecy of the confessional, it called for an ecclesiastical response: civil authorities were not to be notified because it involved a sacrament of the Catholic Church, not a crime of the state. Guilty priests could be thrown out of the priesthood and a penitent who told someone what happened had 30 days to report the incident to the bishop or face excommunication. In other words, the document detailed punitive measures for miscreants—just the opposite of a cover-up.

On May 2, we issued a news release that pointed out FAIR’s inaccuracies on the story. We noted that rather than do its own homework, FAIR resorted to a British tabloid to do its dirty work.

Less than two weeks later, FAIR challenged our statement. The watchdog group stood by its original report and that the 1962 document could be read to include acts outside the confessional. In its rebuttal, FAIR cited a priest that provided no evidence from the document that substantiated FAIR’s accusation.

FAIR’s actions were despicable and it is never to be trusted again on matters Catholic.

WOMEN, GAYS AND “BOSTON LEGAL”

On the May 14 episode of the ABC program “Boston Legal,” David E. Kelley, the show’s creator, once again displayed his hatred for Catholicism. No one in Hollywood is more

fascinated—and—angry with the Catholic Church than is Kelley. The day after the show aired we hung Kelley out to dry.

The episode was focused on the plight of yet another terribly oppressed woman. The source of her oppression, of course, was the Catholic Church. The woman desired to be a priest, but she refused to walk down the block and join the Episcopal Church. She realized Kelley's dream by evincing a hatred for diversity and tolerance: she sued the Catholic Church for discrimination.

The same clergy strictures apply to Orthodox Judaism, Mormonism, Islam and Orthodox Christianity, why didn't Kelley go after them? The answer is clear: these religions don't count; it is the big bad Catholic Church that Kelley wants to knife. For example, in the show's courtroom lies were told about the Catholic Church's alleged support for slavery, the execution of witches and the Inquisition. [Note: It was the Catholic Church—not any other religion—which first opposed slavery, and it was St. Patrick who was the first public person in history to fight against it; and for the most part, it was the civil authorities, not the Church, who punished witches and were responsible for the Inquisition.] In the end, Kelley's biggest fantasy is realized—the Catholic Church's tax-exempt status is revoked. Oh, yes, Kelley also spoke vicariously about sodomy: it should not be a sin.

On May 15, the same day we issued our news release, news broke that the imperial judges at the California Supreme Court overturned the state's ban on gay marriage. This ban was the express will of the people, but this meant nothing to the court. Instead, they allowed Steve to marry Sam (they did not rule on whether Stan could make it a trifecta); this must have made Kelley gush. But it won't last: he'll get another reality check in November when the state votes on this issue.

We ended our news release by calling on our members to contact ABC to voice their disapproval of Kelley's portrayal of

Catholicism. We also called on our members to ask her if any of Kelley's friends dying of AIDS have ever been serviced in one of those tax-exempt Catholic hospitals.

If you would like to let ABC know your opinion, e-mail ABC's Programming Senior Vice President, Kim Rozenfeld at kim.rozenfeld@abc.com