

IF ONLY PRIESTS WERE TERRORISTS

It is only right that people as diverse as Boston Archbishop Sean O'Malley, Secretary of State John Kerry, and Rep. Keith Ellison have called on Americans not to blame all Muslims for the behavior of the two Muslim terrorists who bombed Boston. Others, however, have gone way beyond this call for restraint.

The *Wall Street Journal* ran a piece yesterday by Michael B. Mukasey titled, "Make No Mistake, It Was Jihad." His point was well made. Another apt headline, this one from today's *Dallas Morning News*, says, "Boston Bombing Suspect Charged; Say Religion Motivated Bombing."

Despite the evidence, we are told by Religion Dispatches, "Don't Blame Religion for Boston Bombings." Akbar Ahmed from American University is confident that "Islam had nothing to do with it." The *New York Times* begs us to distinguish between Al Qaeda and "Muslim extremists." The *Atlantic* website ran the headline, "The Boston Bombers Were Muslim: So?" The Southern Poverty Law Center ridicules the idea that radical Muslims had anything to do with the bombings, accusing those who draw attention to this of blaming the "bogeyman."

It's too bad the aforementioned don't think of accused priests the way they do accused Muslims; then we may not have as much priest-bashing as we do. It is hard not to notice that the same people who never go to bat for priests—even when they are uniformly condemned as molesters—are now all jacked up about the role Islamism plays in promoting Muslim terrorism. Indeed, they are in complete denial.

Bill Maher, who typically takes cheap shots at priests, is to be commended for taking aim at a guest who tried to equate Islam with Christianity and Judaism. If Maher gets it, why

don't the others?

CMU APOLOGIZES FOR "NAKED POPE"

A female student at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) dressed as the pope while appearing naked from the waist down at the annual art school parade. Her pubic hair was shaved in the shape of a cross; she passed out condoms to the public. Administrators are reviewing this incident to see "if our community standards or laws were violated."

At that time, Catholic League president Bill Donohue raised several questions about what happened. For one thing, he noted that the university did not have to ponder what to do regarding an earlier recent incident involving one of its fraternities: it simply suspended the students, as well as the entire Beta Theta Pi fraternity, for taking sexual pictures and videos inside the frat house and then emailing them to other members. An investigation was underway. But when it came to a female student who walked the streets naked from the waist down while mocking the pope, the administrators were much more relaxed. She was not suspended during a probe of this matter.

"The Freedom of Expression Policy" at CMU prizes individual expression, but it is not absolute: it explicitly ties rights to responsibilities. Perhaps most important, the "Carnegie Mellon Code" says students "are expected to meet the highest standards of personal, ethical and moral conduct possible." It would seem axiomatic that the offending student violated these strictures.

Donohue argued that if CMU were to tolerate this incident, invoking no sanctions whatsoever, then it would open a door it may well regret. What, he asked, if instead of shaved pubic hair in the shape of a cross, a student chooses to depict a swastika?

CMU's decision not to suspend this female student, who publicly ridiculed Catholics and violated the local ordinance on public nudity, while invoking sanctions against the frat boys for offensive behavior behind closed doors, was legally problematic and morally indefensible.

Later CMU president Jared Cohon did apologize for the incident. His apology was sincere and much appreciated. A final resolution of this incident was not made, so it was too early to say whether CMU would treat this "highly offensive" act, as Cohon put it, the way it would resolve a pending case involving fraternity students and sex videos.

Donohue responded: "To treat the female incident in a less severe manner would raise questions about CMU's sensitivity to anti-Catholicism, and would also put into play the issue of gender discrimination. We look forward to a just resolution to both of these indefensible incidents."

A week later Cohon released a statement explaining that campus police had filed misdemeanor charges against the offending student, as well as two others. His letter balanced the need for freedom of expression with a commitment to fighting intolerance.

That is fine, but Cohon discredits real artistic merit when he says the student "made an artistic statement that proved to be controversial." Donohue commented: "There is nothing artistic about this infantile anti-Catholic insult. But we appreciate his willingness not to dodge this issue."

NEWARK PRIEST RESIGNS

Father Michael Fugee recently admitted to violating his agreement with the Newark Archdiocese and the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office; thus, his decision to step down. His dishonesty is appalling. Moreover, he has clearly impugned his character.

In a May 1 report, Catholic League president Bill Donohue said, "What is really going on here is an attempt to sunder Archbishop Myers—Fugee is not the man they want. They want Myers, and that is because they detest what he stands for."

Fugee's resignation does nothing to change the Catholic League's position. Indeed, had there not been calls for Myers to resign over this matter, there would have been no reason to comment on it.

There is a concerted effort on the part of left-wing Catholics and ex-Catholics, aided and abetted by some in the media, to take down a bishop. But not just any bishop: he must be a conservative. To this day, the way these activists have reacted to their hero, the disgraced former archbishop of Milwaukee, Rembert Weakland, is in stark contrast to their response to conservative bishops who have been embroiled in controversy (e.g., Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City-St. Joseph and Newark Archbishop John Myers).

We've said it before, and we'll say it again: any priest who is guilty of committing a crime, especially sexual abuse, should have the book thrown at him; he will get no defense from the Catholic League. But when we see that the clergy of other religions, as well as public school officials, are being held to a lesser standard than our bishops, that is cause for

action. Not until we get a level playing field will we back off.

STAR-LEDGER'S WAR ON ARCHBISHOP MYERS

The following is an excerpt from a report by Bill Donohue on the Newark Star-Ledger's war on Archbishop John Myers; it was sent to all of the bishops.

On April 28, an editorial in the Newark *Star-Ledger* called on Newark Archbishop John J. Myers to resign. There should be a resignation, but it should not be limited to one person: the entire editorial board of the newspaper should resign immediately.

The occasion of the editorial is the alleged failure of the Newark Archdiocese to police Father Michael Fugee. In 2001, he was charged with groping a teenager while wrestling. After initially being found guilty, the verdict was overthrown by an appellate panel of judges. Fugee agreed to certain conditions, which the newspaper says have been violated. The *Star-Ledger* wants Archbishop Myers to resign because he allegedly did not hold Fugee to the terms of the agreement. As will soon be disclosed, this accusation is patently false.

Accompanying the editorial was a front-page story on Father Fugee. The Sunday article, which ran over 2,000 words, recounted various aspects of this issue. It did not mention, however, that in addition to being cleared by the civil courts, the archdiocesan review board cleared Fugee of any wrongdoing. Nor did it mention that the case was sent to Rome for review; no charges were brought against him. In other

words, Fugee's case was thrice thrown out. Also, the newspaper failed to mention that there has not been one allegation made against this priest in the past 12 years. So why is the *Star-Ledger* going ballistic?

The following two paragraphs from the editorial explain the basis of its complaint:

"Part of the [court] deal was an agreement that Fugee signed, along with the archdiocese, committing all parties to keeping

Fugee away from minors. Fugee was not to work in any position involving children, or have any affiliation with youth groups. He could not attend youth retreats, or even hear the confession of minors.

"With the full knowledge and approval of Myers, Fugee did all of those things. Look at the picture of him clowning around with children [whose faces were obscured] in today's paper, and it makes you want to scream a warning. The agreement was designed to prevent exactly that."

Here is exactly what the agreement said:

"It is agreed and understood that the Archdiocese shall not assign or otherwise place Michael Fugee in any position within the Archdiocese that allows him to have *any unsupervised contact* with or to supervise or minister to any minor/child under the age of 18 or work in any position in which children are involved." (My italics.) [Note: In the next paragraph, the identical language is used to hold Father Fugee to these terms.]

Fugee later admitted that he violated the agreement. But at the time the story broke, this was not known.

What is really going on here is an attempt to sunder Archbishop Myers—Fugee is not the man they want. They want

Myers, and that is because they detest what he stands for.

The first editorial on Archbishop Myers was published by the *Star-Ledger* on April 17, 2002; it took him to task for his views on how best to handle allegations of sexual abuse. It said he “apparently still believes the church ought to decide first who is suspect before notifying civil authorities.” Let’s hope he always does. What should he do? Call 911 whenever someone drops a dime making an accusation against a priest?

In 2003, Archbishop Myers released a set of strict procedures and guidelines that affected every employee in the archdiocese. The rules were a comprehensive code of conduct that should have been welcomed by everyone, including critics of the Catholic Church. Instead, the newspaper made fun of it.

On May 7, 2004, it took him to task for saying that pro-abortion politicians should refrain from receiving Communion. Does the *Star-Ledger* think it has the right to police Myers, or that he should check in with them before making house rules?

Not surprisingly, the groups cited by the *Star-Ledger* who are upset with Archbishop Myers are all dissidents. Consider Theresa Padovano, who heads Voice of the Faithful in New Jersey. Voice is described as a “lay reform group.” In fact, it is a small collection of elderly Catholics and ex-Catholics who are at war with the Church over many issues. By the way, Theresa Padovano is an ex-nun activist married to Anthony Padovano, an ex-priest activist who is also at odds with Catholicism.

The next group cited is the New Jersey chapter of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP). It is labeled “a national advocacy and support group.” What it advocates is a war on the Catholic Church and what it supports is unlicensed counseling of alleged abuse victims.

The third group, bishopaccountability.org, is branded by the newspaper as a “watchdog group.” Attack dog would be more accurate. It posts the names of accused priests on its website, admitting that it “does not confirm the veracity of any actual allegation.”

It is one thing to criticize a bishop, quite another to demand his resignation. The facts in this case do not warrant such a conclusion.

MODERN MARTYRDOM

Patrick J. McNamara, Ph.D.

Paul Marshall, Lela Gilbert and Nina Shea, *Persecuted: The Global Assault on Christians* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013).

“The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christianity,” wrote the author Tertullian in the third century A.D. Tertullian was writing as the early Church was being persecuted by the Roman emperors. Today when we in the West think of Christian persecutions, we often envision an arena with hungry lions and a blood-thirsty crowd. In short, we tend to think of it as something that happened long ago.

It isn’t. It’s happening right now as we speak. Yet we don’t hear much about it. The fact is, as authors Paul Marshall, Lela Gilbert and Nina Shea note in their new book *Persecuted: The Global Assault on Christians*, “Christians are the single most persecuted religious group in the world today.” That’s not a matter of opinion: they aptly cite sources as divergent as the Pew Research Center and the Vatican. The European Bishops’ Conference, for example, notes seventy-five percent of “acts of religious intolerance” are directed against

Christians worldwide.

The authors know their subject well. Marshall is connected with the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom and has lectured widely on the subject. Gilbert is an award-winning journalist and author whose focus is religion. Shea is a lawyer specializing in international human rights. They dedicate their book to religious freedom, the "first freedom," without which other freedoms fall apart; it is a necessity to "the preservation of human dignity and the flourishing of the person." We in the West take this for granted.

The authors look at the following groups:

- The world's last communist states: China, Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea and Laos.
- Former communist states, such as Belarus, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- Countries with a large Hindu/Buddhist population.
- Countries with a predominantly Muslim population.

While persecution occurs elsewhere, it's in the above that they're most frequent and intense. All Christian groups are oppressed in one way or another: Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox. The late Pope John Paul II called this an "Ecumenism of the Martyrs." It's not missionaries who are being persecuted, but the indigenous Christian population. (Most missionaries actually head to America for their immigrant co-religionists who emigrated there.)

In his foreword to the book, Eric Metaxas, author of a bestselling biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran pastor martyred by the Nazis, writes:

"Those of us who live in the West don't experience anything along these lines, and most of us are deeply ignorant of the sufferings of our brethren around the world. Indeed, as we read these words now, millions suffer. And we have been blessed with such a bounty of religious freedom that we can

hardly imagine what such suffering must be like.”

It's not a pretty picture. The authors describe North Korea as “today's most intense persecutor of Christians,” where people are executed or sent to prison camps merely for possessing a Bible. In China, the government has brought about a schism within the Catholic Church, arbitrarily appointing bishops without Vatican approval. It also forces women to act against their consciences by having forced abortions. Protest is met with imprisonment. However, China's “stock answer is that people are not punished for their religious faith but for breaking the law.” China may have the largest growing Christian population in the world (some estimate 100 million).

Vietnam maintains an equally tight control over churches, including a state-sponsored church. The Christian population is also expanding here. Laos has been called a “mini-Vietnam,” with government crackdowns in the mainly Buddhist nation not uncommon. From 1959 to 1992, Cuba, a traditionally Catholic nation, was officially atheist (now Cuba calls itself secular). Tight control is still the rule, with a state-sponsored Protestant Cuban Council of Churches (CCC).

In former Communist nations, registration and surveillance are keywords. In Uzbekistan, a largely Muslim nation, religious literature cannot be distributed without a license, which is practically impossible to get. Belarus has been called “Europe's last dictatorship.” While religious freedom is ostensibly guaranteed, it's practically impossible to register for normal religious activity. Although particular restrictions may vary from region to region, in general, the authors note, “the laws of the former Soviet republics are both harsh and ambiguous, and those in authority often act arbitrarily.”

In south Asia, Hinduism and Buddhism are the main religions (Christianity also has a long history there). While both faiths have a history of peaceful coexistence with neighbors,

there's also a history of militant exclusivism (the authors note this isn't the predominant pattern). Examples include the Hindu nationalist movement Sangh Parivar ("family of organizations") and the radical Buddhist Jathika Hela Urumaya party in Sri Lanka. In some areas of India, there are anticonversion laws, as well as communal acts of violence directed against Christian minorities. Discrimination also exists. In 2003, an order of Catholic nuns in Sri Lanka was prohibited from legal incorporation. The judge argued that there was no fundamental right to propagate a religion, and that Christian expansion would "impair the very existence of Buddhism."

Nowhere is Christian persecution more intense or widespread than the Muslim world. In Turkey, Christian communities (which form .015% of the population) face "a dense web of legal regulations that thwart the ability of churches to survive and, in some cases, even to meet together for worship." Saudi Arabia allows no churches of any kind; the "Christian community consists almost entirely of foreign workers and diplomats."

Iran, the authors write, is "one of the world's worst religious persecutors." In its government, Islamic clergy have a prominent place. Religious discrimination is not banned. The penalty for killing women and non-Muslims is less than that for killing a Muslim male. Jews and Orthodox Christians may not hold military commissions or government positions. In recent years the arrest of Christians has increased for alleged conspiracy. Converts are routinely arrested. The authors contend the United States has focused more on Iran's potentiality for developing nuclear weapons than its religious persecution. In the case of Saudi Arabia, a strategic ally and supplier of a fourth of the world's oil, America has been reluctant to protest on religious matters.

In other countries, the threat of persecution is increasing. In Iraq, the main threat comes not from the government, but

from terrorists and extremists. The Arab Spring of 2011, a series of revolutionary uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, has not boded well for the Christian population of those countries. Islamist regimes have brought greater danger than ever before. This is a major problem for peace, especially in the Middle East, and in more ways than one. For example, Charles Malik, who played a major role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, notes that these Christian communities have helped encourage "Islamic openness and moderation, creating an environment of pluralism that fosters open acknowledgement of the different other." Once gone, widespread intolerance can't be far.

There is also the question of anti-Christian abuses far different from those in Communist, post-Communist, Islamic and other regimes. In Burma and Eritrea, we see militant regimes determined to wipe out any type of opposition. In Ethiopia, long a Christian country, Muslims are making significant inroads and directing violence against local Christians. The message is quite clear throughout this book; as one witness put it, there are many parts of the world where Christians are becoming an "endangered species." Then there are other areas, like China, where Christianity is growing in unprecedented numbers. But this expansion is taking place there under the aegis of state-sponsored oppression.

The sources used in this book are extremely reliable. There are no polemical anecdotes here; there's just hard fact. The U.S. International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA), which they describe as "[o]ne of the great successes of past political mobilization against religious persecution," mandated that the State Department publish annual reports of religious persecution throughout the world. These are the sources for many of the incidents described in this book. The authors write: "They have official stature and are relied upon throughout the world." Add to this the writing and work of the three authors, and it makes for powerful reading.

The authors conclude this impressive work with a “call to action.” They call for use of the presidential “bully pulpit,” whereby the President of the United States calls attention to human rights abuses involving religious intolerance. It’s a tool that’s gone largely silent under the present administration. There are other suggestions:

“We, as citizens living in freedom, are not powerless. Sometimes within our given circumstances we are able to take steps on our own to help: as diplomats or members of the international business community, or as ordinary people by starting social media or Internet campaigns, by organizing mass letter writing and petitions to oppressive governments abroad, or by using music and art to raise awareness.”

The authors are quick to point out that this isn’t just an issue that concerns Christians alone, nor even religious people alone. It’s an issue that involves all: “We believe that all citizens of any or no religion should be equally concerned with the persecution of people of any or no religion.”

This is an important book, and a well written one. It reads quickly, even if the contents are sometimes hard to process. Once again, it’s hard for us in the West, where we often take our freedom (particularly our religious freedom) for granted, to process everything contained herein. But it’s important that we do, because it’s an issue that concerns all of us, believers and non-believers. And we need to remember that we have a moral obligation to lessen the plight of our brothers and sisters worldwide, in any way we can. Persecution isn’t just something that happened long ago in ancient Rome: it’s happening right now. And we need to do something about it.

Dr. Patrick McNamara is Director of Communications for the Catholic League.