

NY STATE SENATOR APOLOGIZES; ISSUE RESOLVED

On the morning of May 11, we learned that Brad Hoylman, a New York State Senator, posted an anti-Catholic tweet. We immediately condemned his remark and asked those on our email list to contact him. We also said he should recuse himself from voting on any measure dealing with the sexual abuse of minors. We made sure that his colleagues in the Albany legislature learned of his bigotry, and our response to it.

A few hours later he called Bill Donohue to apologize. Donohue accepted the apology, noting Hoylman's sincerity.

The subject of Hoylman's tweet was a new bill introduced in Albany that would provide restitution to minors who were sexually abused, regardless of where the offense took place. The funds to be distributed, \$300 million, would come from state assets controlled by the Manhattan District Attorney's office.

Hoylman is a sponsor of the Child Victims Act, a bill that addresses the same issue, though it would not draw on public funds. He did not support the new bill. That was his prerogative. But he had no right to make anti-Catholic remarks. Here is his tweet:

"It's an outrage to suggest using public money to cover for institutions that have harbored child sex predators. Like robbing Peter to pay John Paul II."

Hoylman not only engaged in bigotry, he showed how badly educated he was on this subject.

Over the last ten years, the average number of credible accusations made in the previous year against over 52,000 priests and deacons is 7.1. No institution in society has a

better record on this issue than the Catholic Church.

In 2004, a report by the U.S. Department of Education found rampant sexual abuse by teachers in the public schools. It also revealed that in only one percent of the cases did superintendents see to it that offending teachers did not continue teaching elsewhere.

There was another important study by the Associated Press in 2007, and in 2016 USA Today followed through with one of its own. Both concluded that nothing had changed since the Department of Education report.

“The sexual abuse of minors is a national problem,” said Donohue. “No one institution owns it, but if there is one that is in first place, it sure isn’t the Catholic Church.”

Hoylman fed anti-Catholicism by floating a cruel stereotype. Every demographic group has its stereotypes, but few public persons promote them. Donohue asked, “Why does Hoylman act differently?”

Holyman told Donohue that he got the message and could not defend what he said. Indeed, he thanked him for calling him out about this issue. Case closed.

INMATES SECURE RIGHTS

When we learned that Catholic prisoners at a Massachusetts correctional facility were being denied their religious rights, we moved quickly to have them restored. They were.

In January, Bill Donohue wrote to the superintendent of a prison in Bridgewater, Massachusetts inquiring why Christmas Mass was held on December 28. He also wanted to know why

several Friends and Family Masses had been cancelled, and why prison ministry volunteers were not given permission to attend these Masses.

There was also the issue of a Catholic deacon being denied the right to distribute rosaries to indigent inmates. Instead, those who wanted rosaries were told to purchase them in prison canteens, at an inflated price.

“While all of this is disturbing enough,” Donohue wrote, “we also are given to understand that there has been disparate treatment regarding those of different religious faiths. Specifically, Muslim inmates do not suffer similar restrictions or obstacles to their prayer and worship activities.”

The superintendent wrote to Donohue saying that the irregularities were due to staffing problems. Donohue wrote back asking for assurances that during Lent, and in particular Holy Week leading up to Easter, Catholic inmates would be able to avail themselves of all required services.

The good news is that the prisoners were able to secure all of their religious rights during the Easter season. We’re so happy we could help and set things straight.

MARX’S BLOODY LEGACY

William A. Donohue

May 5th marked the 200th anniversary of the birth of Karl Marx. He is being celebrated by those who are horrified by Hitler, which makes their opposition to genocide phony. What Marx bequeathed—his legacy is written in blood—makes Hitler

look benign. This is why anyone who condemns Hitler without also condemning his communist counterparts is a fraud. It is not Hitler's body count that matters to them, it is the cause. As the Marxists are fond of saying, the truth is that which serves the cause.

Marx lived a parasitic existence, squeezing his parents for every dime he could get; he even managed to get an advance on his inheritance. His own pampered life was a far cry from the daily grind of the working class that he championed (how many workers had a maid?) As the great British historian Paul Johnson pointed out, Marx's knowledge was not gleaned firsthand—there is no evidence that he ever set foot in a factory.

The classless society that Marx predicted would emerge under communism showcased his anthropological and sociological ignorance. Hierarchy and inequality are an essential and irrevocable part of the human condition, *which is why no society in the history of the world has lacked either property.*

Marx conceded that before the classless society was achieved there must be a "dictatorship of the proletariat." He even went so far as to say that "In order to establish equality, we must first establish inequality." But as history shows, the path to the classless society always ends with the dictatorship. Who did Marx say would staff the "dictatorship of the proletariat"? Why people like him—that job would fall to intellectuals.

What would the communist paradise look like? In his famous work, *The German Ideology*, Marx waxes romantic, explaining how each man would act. Under communism, "nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity...[making] it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have in mind, without ever becoming hunter,

fisherman, herdsman or critic.”

Ironically, communism is supposed to follow the advanced capitalist industrial order, yet what Marx described is more like a pre-industrial society. It wouldn't matter much if his rendering of what happens under communism amounted to nothing more than childlike musings, but unfortunately his prescription was taken seriously. It gave us the Gulag in the Soviet Union and the Laogai, or “Bamboo Gulag,” in China.

There are those who, such as Cardinal Reinhard Marx, an advisor to Pope Francis, deny that there is a line between Marx's ideas and genocide. They are wrong. The line is direct and ineluctable. As Solzhenitsyn put it, Stalin didn't pervert Marxism, he perfected it.

R.J. Rummel, a professor emeritus at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, is one of the world's foremost authorities on genocide. The following data are taken from his work and can be found in my book, *Why Catholicism Matters*.

Under the Soviet Union, a Marxist state, 61 million people were killed; Stalin was responsible for 43 million of them. Under Mao, another Marxist state, 77 million were killed. By contrast, under Hitler, 21 million were killed, including 6 million Jews. Proportionately, Pol Pot beat everyone: in his Marxist state, he killed 2 million Cambodians out of a population of 7 million.

Marx's fans live in a parallel universe. Consider what Jason Barker, a South Korean professor, wrote in the *New York Times* on April 30. “Social justice movements like Black Lives Matter and #MeToo, owe something of an unspoken debt to Marx through their unapologetic targeting of the ‘eternal truths’ of our age.”

Barker is badly educated and the *New York Times* is just as delinquent for publishing this trash.

Here's what Marx thought about blacks. He called the German labor leader Ferdinand Lassalle a "Jewish Nigger." Marx was also a self-hating Jew. He told us who "the real Jew" is. "What is the worldly cult of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly god? Money."

Invoking the #MeToo crusade also makes Barker look foolish.

Is he aware that after Marx married he impregnated his maid? Lenchen was her name, and his son was called Freddy. Marx never supported his out-of-wedlock son because he didn't want anyone to know he had one. So he got his colleague, Friedrich Engels, to assume paternity. How do we know this? Because on his deathbed, Engels admitted that Freddy was Marx's son.

Everything I have written is well documented. Unfortunately, it is almost never discussed in the classroom. We have a whole generation growing up that knows absolutely nothing about the genocide committed in Marx's name, nor his racism, anti-Semitism, or misogyny.

Not for nothing did Marx's daughter, Eleanor, write him a letter telling him what a classic phony he was for feigning compassion for the poor. She later committed suicide. That's another part of his bloody legacy, and it is one that the professoriate will never discuss.

ARE RELIGIOUS GAYS SUICIDAL?

Bill Donohue

Four researchers with Ph.D.s have published an article in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* titled, "Association of Religiosity With Sexual Minority Suicide Ideation and

Attempt.” It seeks to determine the effects of religion on suicidal ideas and attempts at suicide.

The data were culled from a larger study, one taken in 2011 by the University of Texas at Austin’s Research Consortium; it collected data on over 21,000 college students aged 18-30.

Consistent with other studies, this one concluded that lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and those who are questioning their sexual identity, have a higher rate of suicidal ideas and attempts at suicide than heterosexuals. But it breaks with most other studies on an important point: it asserts that gays who take their religion seriously are more likely to have suicidal thoughts, and are more likely to attempt suicide, than those who are not religious.

Most studies show an inverse relationship between how religious a person is and the likelihood of being suicidal. In one of the most impressive research undertakings to date, cited by the authors, it was found that “adults who attended religious worship at least once a month had lower odds of attempting suicide over the next 10 years compared with those who did not attend, and individuals who sought spiritual comfort had lower odds of suicide ideation for 10 years compared to people who were not spiritual.”

Similarly, in Austria, a noted study found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals “with a religious affiliation had lower odds of attempting suicide than LGB adults who were not affiliated, and those who felt a greater sense of belongingness to their religious organization were less likely to endorse suicide ideation.”

Even more important, “LGB individuals who left their religion to resolve the conflict between their sexual orientation and religious affiliation had greater odds of attempting suicide than those with unresolved conflict.”

Unfortunately, the authors fail to probe how seriously this

undercuts the popular notion that once a gay person “liberates” himself from religious strictures, he will be at peace with himself. Just the opposite appears to be true, at least from this study. Falling back on oneself, especially during times of adversity, can be stressful, if not dangerous.

The most controversial finding by the four university researchers, as already indicated, reveals that gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and questioning individuals “do not experience the benefits of religiosity’s protective association against suicide ideation and attempt.”

From this conclusion, the researchers contend that faith-based organizations “may not be appropriate for LGBTQ individuals in distress, especially when religion may be a contributing element in distress for LGBTQ individuals.” But their data, as the authors readily concede, are contradicted by other studies (in Austria those who left their religion experienced worse problems). It is thus quite a leap to conclude that faith-based organizations do more harm than good.

The undercurrent of bias that is evident in this study is affirmed when the researchers maintain that “two of the world’s most common religions, Christianity and Islam, largely condemn homosexuality as a sin,” and are therefore a large part of the problem.

Astonishingly, they do not cite Judaism, which was the first world religion to condemn homosexuality, and from which Christianity and Islam drew upon copiously in crafting their teachings on marriage and the family.

More bias can be detected by considering a remark made by John R. Blosnich, one of the four authors. He spoke to the Huffington Post about the problem facing religious-minded gays, commenting, “It can be very scary to be caught in a space where your religion tells you that you are a ‘sinner’ just for being who you are.”

He should identify which religion he is talking about. It is certainly not true of Catholicism: homosexuals are regarded as children of God, the same way heterosexuals are. Why this needs to be said at all is troubling as this teaching is not new. But to those who want to put a negative tag on Christianity, it makes sense to distort the truth.

If a heterosexual commits adultery, he is no more condemned for being straight than a homosexual who practices homosexuality is for being gay. It is the behavior—adultery and homosexuality—that counts as a sin, not sexual orientation.

One of the findings that the researchers uncovered deserves more attention than they allow. They found that “questioning individuals had the highest prevalence of recent suicide ideation (16.4%) and bisexual students had the highest prevalence of lifetime attempts (20.3%).”

The authors do not speculate why this is so. But if there is one thing that those who question their sexual identity have in common with bisexuals—and this is not true of gay men and lesbians—it is their tentative status. Who are they?

Living with this kind of indeterminacy may explain their desperate condition. It may also suggest that programs that encourage young people to experiment—to find out whether they are straight or gay—may actually be creating a kind of sexual dissonance that is harmful to their wellbeing. Regrettably, this is currently going on in some schools, the effect of which is to promote a serious identity crisis.

Those who question their sexual identity deserve our compassion, as well as our assistance. What they don't need is further experimentation. The fact that so many young people are caught up in this quandary today is a tribute to the postmodernist belief that denies the existence of nature.

Fatuously, they hold that all human behavior is a social

construction. This is not only unscientific—it is an ideological contention—it leads to many wrongheaded policies. It is also the driving force behind the problems incurred by boys who think they are girls, and vice versa.

Of course, the central problem remains, and it is independent of religious practice and affiliation: Why are gays more suicidal than heterosexuals? There are plausible explanations, none of which comport with the ideological leanings of the authors of this study.

Is there a link between promiscuity and suicide, and are gays more promiscuous than heterosexuals? The answer to both questions is an unqualified yes.

In a 2004 article published in the same journal as the study by the four authors, it found that girls who are sexually active are almost three times more likely to attempt suicide than girls who abstain. For boys, those who are sexually active are eight times more likely to attempt suicide. A more recent study published in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* established a strong correlation between casual sex and depression among teenagers.

According to practicing psychotherapist Zev Ballen, “The correlation between sexual promiscuity, depression, and suicide is very clear. Multitudes of people are attempting to fill up with sex—this breeds guilt, self-hatred, emptiness and shame.” Yet one strains to find researchers and educators who are willing to admit that promiscuity is a gateway to self-destructive behaviors.

The problem of promiscuity in the gay community is particularly acute. In a brutally honest article last year in the Huffington Post, journalist Michael Hobbes wrote that “Gay people are now, depending on the study, between 2 and 10 times more likely than straight people to take their own lives. We’re twice as likely to have a major depressive episode.” It

is for reasons such as this that gay activist Larry Kramer once said there is no such thing as a gay lifestyle—it's a deathstyle.

"In a survey of gay men who recently arrived in New York City," Hobbes says, "*three-quarters* suffered from anxiety or depression, abused drugs or alcohol or were having risky sex—or some combination of the three." (His italics.) Which begs the question: Why are most gay men who move to New York City unable to live a normal life? Heterosexuals seem to have little problem making the adjustment. Hobbes provides an answer, and it is one that needs to be taken seriously.

Hobbes maintains that "Despite all the talk of our 'chosen families,' gay men have fewer close friends than straight people or gay women." This speaks volumes about the lonely lifestyle that so many gay men experience, calling into serious question their ability to form long-lasting bonds.

Consider what one young man, Adam, cited by Hobbes, said about his coming out. "I went to West Hollywood because I thought that's where my people were. But it was really horrifying. It's made by gay adults, and it's not welcoming for gay kids. You go from your mom's house to a gay club where a lot of people are on drugs and it's like, this is my community? It's like a f***ing jungle."

Adam has touched on something real: real communities don't act this way. What he is describing is a constellation of fully atomized individuals, not a community where social bonds thrive. This matter needs to be studied more fully, but for political reasons it will not be.

How can it be that at a time of growing acceptance of gay rights so many gays are unhappy? The conventional wisdom, one widely shared by the media and in the schools, is that the legalization of gay marriage, and its acceptance by the public, would lead to an overall increase in the wellbeing of

gays. It may sound plausible, but there is no evidence to support this outcome.

Indeed, as Hobbes shows, "In the Netherlands, where gay marriage has been legal since 2001, gay men remain three times more likely to suffer from a mood disorder than straight men, and 10 times more likely to engage in 'suicidal self-harm.'" It's no different in Sweden, the sexual Shangri-La of elites. The Swedes have had civil unions since 1965, and gay marriage since 2009, but "men married to men have triple the suicide rate of men married to women."

Were gays better off in the closet than out? As Hobbes points out, "A study published in 2015 found that rates of anxiety and depression were higher in men who had recently come out than in men who were still closeted." This is not a brief to force gays back into the closet, but it is a wake-up call to those who think that the decline in stigma redounds to better psychological health for gays.

It must be stressed that promiscuity, while endemic among gay men in more recent times, was not always so. Kinsey found that homosexuals were less promiscuous than heterosexuals. Even as late as 1960, researchers were finding that homosexuals were relatively sexually inactive. But once the sexual revolution hit stride in the 1960s, sexual experimentation increased among men and women, straight and gay. So did STDs.

It is promiscuity that is the biggest threat to those who practice it, not social stigma or religious strictures. But many elites in the health profession and higher education are in a state of denial over this verity, and those who know better are too often intimidated from speaking the truth. Until this changes, there will be little or no progress in reversing the experience of many gay men.

SEN. BALDWIN REJECTS JUDICIAL NOMINEE

Wisconsin Senator Tammy Baldwin has told her home-state nominee to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, Gordon Giampietro, that she will not support him by returning a favorable blue slip to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Giampietro, a former federal prosecutor, has impeccable credentials, but his support for marriage as the exclusive union between a man and a woman created controversy in some circles.

Baldwin's decision reeks of an anti-Catholic animus. She wants to punish someone who, despite his qualifications to serve on the federal bench, holds to the same conception of marriage as taught by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (as well as many other world religions): marriage is not open to members of the same sex. It is open only to those who have the prospect of creating a family, and that is not something that two men or two women are capable of doing.

Her decision is anti-Catholic because it effectively says that those Catholics who accept the teachings of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, on the subject of marriage and the family, have no legitimate role to play in public life. It is important to note that if Giampietro were some kind of Catholic extremist, he would not have earned the unanimous support of the Wisconsin bishops.

What Baldwin is doing is setting a dangerous precedent, one that is grounded in bigotry. She is up for reelection this year and has now effectively alienated a wide swath of the

Wisconsin electorate, a move that could prove to be politically suicidal in November.

Senator Charles Grassley, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, has the power to grant Giampietro's nomination a hearing, based on the fact that a favorable blue slip was returned by Wisconsin's other senator, Ron Johnson. But Grassley indicated that he is not generally disposed to doing so for nominees to the federal district court (he prefers to exercise his prerogative when nominees to the federal circuit court are being blocked).

Bill Donohue wrote to Grassley asking him to make an exception given the role that religious bigotry played in Giampietro's defeat. One of Grassley's aides called to say that he was not going to budge. In other words, the Republicans did nothing to help one of their own.

DOES NEW YORK TIMES HAVE A SEX SCANDAL?

On May 1st there was a small story in the *Times* about its metro editor, Wendell Jamieson, resigning for unexplained reasons. Of course, his "resignation" was forced—he was effectively fired—coming as it did after an internal investigation. "I regret and apologize for my mistakes and leaving under these circumstances," Jamieson said.

Were they "mistakes," or was it a crime? We don't know because Dean Baquet, the executive editor of the newspaper, and Joseph Khan, the managing editor, told employees that they will not discuss what happened. It's a secret. Why are they refusing to speak? "To protect the privacy of those involved, we do not

intend to comment further.”

We now know from the *Times*’ May 2nd brief story that Jamieson “was accused of inappropriate behavior by at least three female employees.” It is important to note that we don’t know this because the newspaper has decided to become transparent: We know this because some who are familiar with the investigation have broken their silence.

This is the same newspaper that recently won a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of Harvey Weinstein’s sexual misconduct. This is the same newspaper that treated the world to its non-stop coverage of sexual misconduct at Fox News. And this is the same newspaper that has demanded that the Catholic Church come whistle clean with every priest who has ever been accused of sexual misconduct.

Sexual harassment in New York State involves sexually charged comments, whether verbal or written, as well as unwelcome physical touching. If Jamieson was fired for such reasons, then the *New York Times* should have reported his offense to the District Attorney. That’s what Cardinal Timothy Dolan does when he learns of a priest accused of sexual misconduct, and that’s what the *Times* insists he should do!

Last year, the *New York Times* had to discipline another male reporter, Glenn Thrush, for his alleged sexual misconduct. It did not fire him—instead it took a page from the teachers’ unions and moved him to another office—choosing to allow him to undergo counseling. How convenient.

Why are the media not covering this story? Only Fox News has picked it up on cable, and neither ABC, CBS, nor NBC has touched it. Local New York newspapers, such as the *Daily News* and the *New York Post*, have covered it, but the *Washington Post* and other prominent newspapers are ignoring it. With the exception of “Good Day New York” (a Fox affiliate), local New York TV stations are also giving the *Times* a pass.

If a New York City priest were accused of groping someone 50 years ago—he may now be dead—there is not a media outlet, local or national, that would not cover it. That the media refuse to do some digging on this story, about the so-called newspaper of record, only reinforces the perception of deep-seated media bias. Or is it because they don't want their competitors to start digging for dirt in their own house?

And where is Maureen Dowd, the *New York Times* columnist who loves to write about priestly sexual misconduct? Does she have the guts to press her superiors on what's behind the Jamieson story?

HOUSE CHAPLAIN ISSUE ERUPTS (AGAIN)

The controversy over the House Chaplain issue embroiled Washington for about a week, ending in a victory for the chaplain, a loss for Rep. Paul Ryan, and a surge of media attention for the Catholic League.

There was anti-Catholicism involved on at least two different levels, though we hasten to say that Ryan, who is a practicing Catholic, was not guilty of bigotry. That he botched the issue is not debatable, but that is not the same as being engaged in Catholic bashing. He was not. Here is how the controversy unfolded.

The resignation of Father Pat Conroy as House Chaplain came at the end of April. He had met with Ryan two weeks earlier, saying that Ryan had asked him to resign. It appears that Ryan felt Father Conroy was getting too political in his job. According to Rep. Gerry Connolly, a Catholic Democrat, "For a

lot of members, the outrage is personal, and it's not about Catholicism."

That being the case, the Catholic League did not initially address this issue: anti-Catholicism had nothing to do with it. But then things changed.

Rep. Mark Walker, an ordained Baptist minister and a Republican, said he hoped the new House Chaplain would be somebody who "has adult children" and can "connect with the bulk of the body here." Bill Donohue told the media, "That obviously would preclude most Catholic priests since only a few are married."

The congressman then walked back his remark, saying he meant to say that whoever fills this post should "have experience in dealing with family issues."

This would not be a big issue if there were no history of anti-Catholicism among some Protestant congressmen. But there is.

In 1999-2000, Donohue got into a protracted fight with House Republicans when Father Timothy O'Brien, who was being considered for the post of House Chaplain, became the victim of a vicious smear campaign launched by some evangelicals; he would have been the first Catholic to assume the duties as House Chaplain. He was rejected by the House leadership though the issue remained unresolved.

The bullying of the Catholic League by some Republicans, led by House Speaker Dennis Hastert and House Majority Leader Dick Armey, was relentless. But we fought back and they lost. On March 23, 2000, Father Daniel P. Coughlin was named the first Catholic to become House Chaplain.

Donohue pointed out that Rep. Connolly was rightly upset with Rep. Walker's remark, branding it "anti-Catholic," but the former seminarian, he added, carried his own baggage into this

debate.

In 2008, when Connolly was running for a congressional seat in Virginia, which he ultimately won, he was opposed by Keith Fimian, a Republican. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) accused Fimian of “rolling back women’s rights.” It cited as evidence that Fimian was a member of Legatus, an organization of Catholic CEOs.

This was a hit job. Legatus is an excellent Catholic organization founded and run by Tom Monaghan, who started Domino’s Pizza. It has plenty of women members and zero history of misogyny.

When this unseemly attack on Fimian occurred, Donohue said that although Connolly was not responsible for the DCCC smear, he was the clear beneficiary of it, and should therefore “tell the DCCC to cease and desist with the Catholic bashing immediately.” He never did.

We thought this issue was dying down when another expression of anti-Catholicism was reported. Ryan, feeling the heat from both Republicans and Democrats, reinstated Father Conroy as House Chaplain after the priest rescinded his resignation; Conroy had rethought his decision after consulting with friends. In his letter withdrawing his resignation, Conroy indicted Ryan’s chief of staff, Jonathan Burks.

Conroy said that Burks had told him, “Maybe it’s time that we had a chaplain that wasn’t Catholic.” This led Donohue to call upon Ryan to fire Burks. Burks said that his “recollection” of the conversation was different. That was a weak reply for an ostensibly innocent person to make.

Some friends of the Catholic League were upset that we weighed in against Ryan, who is a reliably pro-life voice in Washington. This misunderstands our mission: we fight defamation and discrimination against individual Catholics and the institutional Church, showing no partisanship to

Republicans or Democrats. We are not the Catholic arm of either Party.

When asked by the Milwaukee *Journal Times* about this issue, Donohue said that Ryan should have come out quickly and cleared the air. “Quite frankly,” he said, “if Ryan would have come out with a plausible explanation [about Burks] that softens the charge and provides greater context, people like me would be satisfied. I understand people say things in the heat of the moment. All I am saying is the big guy [Ryan] has to speak.”

There is no role for anti-Catholicism in politics. This means that no priest should ever be disqualified for the House Chaplain position because he is celibate. It must also be said that there is no role for hypocrisy in dealing with such matters, or for a delayed response.

CALIFORNIA GAY THERAPY BILL CENSORS SPEECH

There are many moral, legal, and professional issues involved in a California bill, AB 2943, which seeks to amend the state’s consumer fraud laws by banning gay and transgender conversion therapy. Whether such therapy works or not, or is morally defensible, may not be as important as the free speech implications of this piece of legislation.

“Sexual orientation change efforts,” the bill says, refer to “any practices that seek to change an individual’s sexual orientation.” It is the absolutist language—*any practices*—that is most troubling.

Though the bill's sponsors, such as Assemblyman Evan Low, argue that the bill does not ban people from selling conversion therapy books or talking about it, this position is not convincing. Moreover, it does little to calm fears by saying that the proposed law is limited to bans on advertising and the sale of conversion therapy.

The Human Rights Campaign, a leading gay rights organization, and the Southern Poverty Law Center, a prominent left-wing organization, have already sought to censor organizations that feature conversion therapy. Neither group has any standing in the mental health field. So it is not a matter of idle speculation what might happen if AB 2943 passes in the Senate—free speech will suffer.

The threat to the First Amendment has led the editorial board of the *Los Angeles Times* to say that the critics of the bill should be taken seriously. "It's possible that the critics of the bill are being alarmist," it said May 7, "but the language of the legislation is ambiguous enough to justify at least some of their concerns." It recommended that the Senate amend the bill "to make it clear that it can't be used against books or religious preaching or counseling about sexuality." That is a reasonable request and should be honored.

What is making this issue needlessly complicated is the Ninth Circuit decision declaring conversion therapy to be conduct, not speech. This is absurd. In making this ruling, the appeals court removed this practice from First Amendment considerations.

To be sure, there are cases where expression can plausibly be seen as conduct. For instance, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black identified himself as a First Amendment absolutist, yet he determined that flag burning was conduct, not speech, and was therefore subject to censorship (the practice was later ruled to be speech and was therefore entitled to First Amendment protection).

Counseling is clearly speech. The fact that the high court ruled that flag burning was not conduct—it is certainly more akin to conduct than counseling is—suggests that AB 2943 would not survive scrutiny by the Supreme Court.

This bill represents the politicization of the mental health profession. The subject of conversion therapy is the proper domain of professional licensing organizations, not lawmakers.

We are contacting the California Senate asking legislators to amend this bill. As it stands now, this bill would do serious damage to free speech, as well as to the autonomy of mental health practitioners.

**COLUMBIA UNIV. SAYS “GOD
LOVES GAY PORN”**

**GOD
HATES
GUNS
LOVES GAY PORN**



That is the inscription—in large letters—posted on a big window on the ground floor of Columbia University’s Lenfest Center for the Arts; it is located at W. 125th Street between Broadway and 12th Avenue.

The Lenfest Center for the Arts is flagged by Columbia as “a dynamic new hub for cultural and civic exchange in Upper Manhattan.” Its goal is to “strengthen local partnerships while highlighting contemporary scholarship, global perspectives, and compelling voices of our time.”

So this is the message—“God Loves Gay Porn”—that the Ivy League school says contributes to “cultural and civic exchange” and “contemporary scholarship.” The bar doesn’t get much lower than this.

Imagine paying \$60,000 a year to get an education like this? There must be a lack of street artists in that neighborhood.

CONGRESSIONAL ATHEISTS MAKE BOGUS CLAIMS

A congressional club for atheists? Yes, one was founded last month, but it did not get off to a roaring start: Of the 535 members of Congress, we can count on one hand how many members there are: four. There are probably more left-handed vegans on Capitol Hill than that.

So who are the members of the Congressional Freethought Caucus? Not surprisingly, they are all Democrats (this is the Party that threw God out of the 2012 Platform): Jared Huffman and Jerry McNerney of California, Jamie Raskin of Maryland, and Dan Kildee of Michigan. Huffman and Raskin are humanists who don't believe in God. McNerney and Kildee tell their constituents that they are Catholic; they need to update their resume.

Given that there are only four members of the Atheist Club, it is appropriate that they have four goals:

- Promoting public policy based on reason, science and moral values
- Protecting the secular character of U.S. government and the separation of church and state
- Opposing discrimination against atheists, agnostics, humanists, seekers, religious and nonreligious persons
- And providing a forum for members of Congress to discuss their "moral frameworks, ethical values, and personal religious journeys"

These claims are bogus.

Science tells us that life begins at conception. All the properties that make us human are present at fertilization—not months, or even days, later. It is striking to note that all four members of the Atheist Club ascribe to an unscientific interpretation of the beginning of life.

For example, they have a 100% record from both Planned Parenthood and NARAL. They also have a 0% rating from the National Right to Life. They not only like abortion rights, they have voted against a congressional resolution to ban abortion after 20 weeks. Their beliefs, then, do not accord with reason or science: they are more akin to superstition.

They say they want to protect the secular character of the federal government and separation of church and state. This claim is also bogus.

The Declaration of Independence makes four references to God, holding that our inalienable rights come from our Creator, not politicians. The First Amendment protects religious liberty—something they fail to mention—and its reference to prohibiting “an establishment of religion” does not support their position: it was crafted precisely to guarantee religious liberty, not separation of church and state (which is nowhere mentioned in the Constitution).

Their third claim, opposing discrimination on the basis of beliefs, is likewise bogus: none of the four has a record of opposing discrimination against practicing Christians. More important, it is not atheists who are stigmatized in our society today, it is the faithful. From college campuses to media pundits and comedians, atheists are almost never the target of insults. No, the bigots save their heat for Christians.

As for having a place to talk about morality, ethics, and religious journeys, that’s what bars are for.

Much of the media hype about the Atheist Club has to do with the increase in the so-called “nones,” those persons who say they have no religious affiliation. The discussion typically assumes that this segment of the population is monolithic. This is another bogus claim.

In 2012, Gallup chief Frank Newport wrote that 80% of Americans were Christian, and that 95% of “*all Americans who have a religion are Christian.*” (His italics.) That number has decreased slightly since then, but not by much. He also found that more than 90% believe in God.

To be sure, the “nones,” or the “unaffiliated,” are growing: a 2015 survey by the Pew Research Center put the number at 16.1%. But only 1.6% of all Americans identify as atheist; 2.4% are agnostic; and 12.1% report “nothing in particular.”

A 2014 Pew survey found that one in three of the unaffiliated (34%) say that religion is either “very important,” or “somewhat important,” to them. Astonishingly, 61% say they believe in God; only 33% do not. Belief in heaven is held by 37% of the “nones,” but it drops to 27% when asked about belief in hell. One in five (21%) believe that the Bible is the word of God.

The data do not feed the narrative that the “nones” are mostly atheists, or that they have given up on God. Which means the Gang of Four who comprise the Atheist Club are less representative of America than either they, or the media, believe.

Recruiting new members will not be easy. How many people want to join a club where everyone sits around discussing why they believe in nothing? Can't imagine it taking too long.