

# CHURCH VANDALISM IS NATIONWIDE

In 2020, many Catholic churches and schools were vandalized during the protests that engulfed the nation. Already this year we have recorded two dozen incidents of vandalism. Unlike last year, where the vandalism was concentrated in cities that were the site of demonstrations, this year the assaults on property are widespread, having nothing to do with ideologically driven protests.

Vandals have struck in Connecticut, Washington, D.C., Louisiana, Ohio, Indiana, Texas, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, North Dakota, California, New York, Florida, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania and Kentucky.

The word "Satan" and a pentagram were found on a defaced statue of St. Therese Lisieux in Abbeville, Louisiana. "Jesus is black" was inscribed on a wall at a church that was almost burned down in Toledo, Ohio. A statue of Mary outside a church in Knobs City, Indiana had the word "Harlot" written on it.

Satanic graffiti was painted on a sidewalk outside a church in our nation's capital, and other satanic symbols were found on a parish hall in Milwaukee. Fires were set in some places and in California there was a rash of incidents where the faces of statues on church property were painted in black. Windows were broken in parish facilities and obscenities were written on walls in Louisville.

In some cases, police reported these were hate crimes. The question is why only some of these incidents are labeled as such. Unless local prosecutors get tough, we are likely to see many more of these attacks. This is one more sign that our culture is in deep trouble.

We make a distinction between cases where drunken teenagers

vandalize a church and cases where something more sinister has happened. Regarding the latter, surely most of those instances should qualify as a hate crime. The police, of course, have their own yardstick. What we want is consistency, and that has not always been the case.

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## THE MEANING OF LINGUISTIC POLITICS

The left has always been convinced that they have some gnostic calling, often manifested in utopian ideas, to change society. That is why they have no ethical problem imposing their beliefs on society. What drives them is an insatiable appetite for power: They want to control the way we think and act.

The meaning of linguistic politics is thought control. Its purpose is to get people to adopt a new mindset, one that mirrors the politics of elites.

The consequences are far reaching. Those who control our words control our thoughts, and our thoughts influence our behavior. They know what they are doing. Today's brand of journalists and educators are masterful practitioners of thought control. They are convinced that it is their job to have us talk the talk. Their talk.

In the 1980s, Bill Donohue remembers a faculty colleague who objected to what someone said, though the colleague did not take issue with the content of what was said. He objected to the "negative" phrasing. At the time Donohue thought what was said was strange. No longer—he's used to it. Indeed, not a day goes by without Orwell being validated.

The Associated Press (AP) publishes a stylebook that is used by many journalists, inside and outside of AP. Its 55th edition, 2020-2022, contains more than 200 new and revised entries. Among the changes are calling the homeless “people without homes” or “people without housing.” To call them “homeless,” the linguistic masters insist, is “dehumanizing.”

We must rid our vocabulary of terms such as “insane,” “crazy/crazed,” “nuts” or “deranged.” The elites have determined that these words are “derogatory.” Similarly, we should not use the term “defund the police,” and that is because it “is sometimes misrepresented as abolishing police.” So what should we say when those who explicitly demand the abolition of the police endorse defunding the police? The masters do not say.

Under the Biden administration, customs and immigration agents are no longer allowed to call illegal aliens by their proper name. What is even more bizarre, they cannot call them “undocumented aliens.” So what should we call those who crash our borders? “Undocumented noncitizen.” Also, we cannot speak about assimilation anymore: We must use the word “integration.”

Homosexual activists are very good at promoting thought control. They are still harassing Jack Phillips, the Christian owner of Masterpiece Cake Shop.

He has never turned down a customer who wanted to buy one of his cakes on the basis of the person’s race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and the like. Everyone is treated equally. But when Phillips was asked to make a cake celebrating the “marriage” of two men, he refused. Had he done so he would have sanctioned behavior he could not in good conscience accept. He was sued; he won in the U.S. Supreme Court. Now he is back in Colorado courts again, this time because he refused to custom a cake celebrating someone’s sex transitioning.

The campuses are alive with invoking punitive measures against students who dare to challenge the reigning linguistic politics. "If I'm a man, and I think I'm a woman, I'm still a man. If I'm a woman who thinks I'm a man, I'm still a woman." As recently as 20 years ago, no one would have regarded this as anything but commonsensical. Now it's controversial. The student who said this was suspended at the State University of New York Genesco.

CNN recently showed its brilliance when it declared that "it's not possible to know a person's gender identity at birth, and there is no consensus criteria for assigning sex at birth." This is a remarkable statement. Are the deep thinkers at CNN aware that the sex of the baby can be known while he is developing in his mother's womb? Moreover, no one is ever "assigned" his or her sex—it is determined by the father and acknowledged by hospital employees.

These instances demonstrate that linguistic politics is very much an expression of postmodernism. To be exact, it is a frontal assault on truth. Educators are its most rabid advocates.

Donohue recalls a meeting of the academic senate at the college where he worked where one of the faculty members took umbrage at the idea that there was such a thing as "correct" spelling. He called it "logocentrism." Donohue looked around the room and noted that some of his colleagues appeared to agree with him.

Donohue then asked if the colleague would object if the finance office were to issue his paycheck with his name and address scrambled. Only a few of them thought it was funny.

Now there are educators in California who insist that there is no such thing as "correct" math," saying it is "racist" to think otherwise. Perhaps we can scramble the numbers in their paycheck as well, the first numeric being a zero.

The more the masters of linguistic politics push, the more we need to push back. We have common sense on our side. More important, we have truth on our side.

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## **BEWARE THE ANTI-RACISM AGENDA**

The Catholic Church regards racism to be “intrinsically evil” and supports policies to check it. It must be noted, however, that today there is no shortage of educators, reporters, activists, and lawmakers who claim to oppose racism while harboring an agenda that sometimes promotes it.

They do so mostly for ideological reasons, though those in the diversity and grievance industry also profit from it monetarily. Critical race theory, which is an inherently racist prescription—it judges people on the basis of their skin color, not their individual traits—is a textbook example of promoting racism in the name of fighting it.

Never have non-whites been treated more fairly than they are today, yet there is an avalanche of news stories that say just the opposite. While objective conditions have definitely improved, the perception that we are a racist nation is widespread. How can this be?

When Senator Tim Scott, an African American, recently said that “America is not a racist country,” he was ridiculed, maligned, and insulted. Why the anger? Because he challenged, to great effect, the raging narrative in elite quarters that America is irredeemably racist.

Vice President Kamala Harris was asked to comment on what Scott said. “No, I don’t think America is a racist country,” she said, but we need to “speak truth about the history of

racism." Previously, she went further than that when she declared, "America has a long history of systemic racism."

President Biden is concerned about racism as well, claiming that "white supremacists" constitute the "most lethal terrorist threat." He took his cues from the FBI which is preoccupied with white supremacists.

Ask most Americans who qualifies as a white supremacist and the likely answer is someone who belongs to the Ku Klux Klan. But the Klan has actually been in decline. So who are these people who pose the "most lethal terrorist threat"?

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) is the go-to site that journalists use to access information about white supremacy and hate crimes. It is a left-wing activist organization that claims to monitor such offenses.

In April it sounded very much like President Biden when its president and CEO, Margaret Huang, said, "We're facing a crisis of far-right extremism and deep threats to our democracy." From whom? She identified the mob storming the Capitol in January as being "led by white supremacists and other far-right extremists."

Huang provided no evidence to support her remarks; she simply asserted that white supremacists were the principal culprits. It apparently never occurred to her that these men and women were mostly angry pro-Trump supporters who felt disabused by electoral politics and political correctness, concerns that have nothing to do with feelings of racial superiority. Veterans and former police officers appear to have been overrepresented. If they are white supremacists, we need to see the empirical evidence.

In fact, the SPLC does a lousy job defining who these white supremacists are. Its lengthy report, "The Year in Hate and Extremism 2020," says an awful lot about white supremacists but is noticeably short on identifying exactly who they are.

For example, it says they track “extremist flyers,” reporting that they found 4,900 “flyering incidents.” The worst offenders, it said, were those who promoted the “white nationalist ideology,” a train of thought it left undefined. It did not say who these white nationalists were or whether they were responsible for any violence. It did say that the Klan is no longer “a significant generator of white supremacist terror,” largely because it “saw its count dwindle to 25 groups in 2020.” So who are the new Klansmen?

SPLC has racism on the brain. In its report, it expresses dismay over the fact that “only 38 percent of respondents” in a survey believed that “systemic racism” accounts for a disparity in health outcomes between whites and non-whites, “even as COVID-19 ravages communities of color.”

It did not say whether white supremacists were to blame for this condition, but it did say that it was unnerved to learn that the majority of Americans thought that Black Lives Matter (BLM) violence in 2020 was a bigger problem than police violence against blacks. With good reason: BLM killed 25 people, assaulted the police, burned down entire neighborhoods, and engaged in widespread looting. In 2019, police shot and killed 999 people: 452 were white and 252 were black; 26 of the whites and 12 of the blacks were unarmed.

For the record, SPLC regards as “far right” extremists anyone who thinks that boys who “transition” to girls should not be allowed to compete against girls in sports and shower with them. Perhaps they are the new Klansmen.

Real racism and extremism, as the Catholic Church understands it, must be opposed and defeated. It does not help this noble cause when prominent Americans and non-profit organizations are bent on finding racism under every rock.

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# BIDEN'S FAITH-BASED PROGRAM IS A BUST

On May 14, Melissa Rogers, the executive director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, met with representatives from six secular organizations: the Freedom From Religion Foundation, the American Humanist Association, American Atheists, Center for Inquiry, Ex-Muslims of North America and the Secular Coalition for America.

None of them are religion-friendly and some are positively militant in their agenda. They expressed their displeasure with the pro-religious liberty policies of the Trump administration, accusing it of fomenting "Christian nationalism." The creation of this fiction is central to the anti-religion politics that drives these groups.

It would be one thing if White House staffers in domestic policy or civil rights invited representatives of these six organizations to discuss their concerns; it is quite another when those who purport to work with people of faith do so. The problem is traceable to February 14, the day Biden issued his executive order establishing his faith-based program.

It was President George W. Bush who founded a White House office of faith-based initiatives. He realized how effective these programs were in the delivery of services to the needy. He also knew that government programs would be enhanced by partnering with these religious agencies. That is why he sought to put an end to government policies that shunned these entities.

On February 14, the White House announced that the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships "will not prefer one



faith over another *or favor religious over secular organizations* (our italics)." But the whole point of creating an office of faith-based programs was to prioritize religious social service agencies.

If the Biden administration is going to manipulate the founding purpose of faith-based initiatives by welcoming the advice of militant secularists, it would do us all a favor and simply trash this office.

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## **ARMENIAN GENOCIDE WAS A CHRISTIAN GENOCIDE**

On April 24, Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, President Biden made a statement on the massacre of the Armenian people that took place in 1915-1916. This was the first of three genocides in the twentieth century; the other two were Stalin's mass killing of the Ukrainians and Hitler's annihilation of the Jews.

We urged President Biden to call the massacre of the Armenians for what it is—genocide. To this day, Turkish leaders take umbrage at any mention of this subject, preferring to live in a state of denial. We should not appease them any longer. Regrettably, too many presidents and senators have failed to speak forthrightly about this issue.

The word "genocide" was coined in 1943 or 1944 (depending on the source) by Polish Jewish writer Raphael Lemkin. Mass killings, he said, amounted to "a crime without a name." He resolved this problem by splicing the Greek word "genos," meaning race or people, with the Latin term "caedo," meaning killing. Hence the word "genocide."

Biden needed to do more than simply invoke this word. He needed to use this opportunity as a teaching moment, one that informs the world about who did what to whom. That would have meant mentioning those who committed this genocide, namely Muslims, and their victims, namely Christians.

This is not a call to brand all Muslims as supporters of genocide—that is morally indefensible. Indeed it is unconscionable. No, this is a plea to be honest.

Though the number who were killed is not a settled issue, the consensus is that 1.5 million Armenians were murdered, along with 300,000 Assyrians and 750,000 Greeks. All were Christian.

We typically hear that it was the rulers of the Ottoman Empire who carried out the massacre. This is true, but it is incomplete.

William B. Rubinstein is a distinguished historian and author of *Genocide*, one of the most authoritative books on this subject. He notes that “The rulers of the Ottoman Empire traditionally regarded themselves as the leaders of the Islamic world.” What they did was not a mistake. Most of the evidence, Rubinstein says, suggests “that the Turkish authorities actively masterminded the mass killing of the Armenians as a deliberate policy.”

Why the Armenians? German historian Michael Hesseman does not mince words. “In the end,” he says, “Armenians weren’t killed because they were Armenians, but because they were Christians.” Further proof that the Muslim rulers were motivated by a hatred of Christians is offered by another specialist in this area. “If it [the Armenian Genocide] was a feud between Turks and Armenians, what explains the genocide carried out by Turkey against Christian Assyrians at the same time?”

According to Hudson Institute scholar Lela Glibert, “It is noteworthy that Adolf Hitler found inspiration in the Armenian

massacre for his Holocaust of European Jews.” Indeed, Hitler knew exactly what the Muslims were doing. “Turkey is taking advantage of the war [World War I] in order to thoroughly liquidate its international foes, i.e, the indigenous Christians, without being thereby disturbed by foreign intervention.”

President Biden often speaks glowingly of Pope Francis. He needs to emulate him in more concrete ways. In 2015, the Holy Father called the slaughter of the Armenians “the first genocide of the 20th century.” Biden should have expanded on this by acknowledging who did what to whom.

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## **SUPREMES TO HEAR ABORTION CASE**

On May 17, the U.S. Supreme Court announced that it has accepted for review an abortion case from Mississippi that could have grave implications.

In 2018, Mississippi passed a law that bars abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy (with limited exceptions). Under the 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, which was reaffirmed in 1992 in the *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* ruling, states cannot ban abortion before viability, which is generally regarded as being around 24 weeks.

The 1992 decision said the state could not impose “an undue burden” on a woman’s right to choose an abortion. So far, this provision has proven to be determinative: the state of Mississippi lost in both the federal district court and the appeals court.

The American people, while not supporting a complete ban on abortions, have been moving away from the Roe decision. They support more restrictions on why and when an abortion should be permitted. Also, the makeup of the Supreme Court has become more sympathetic to pro-life arguments.

The high court will hear oral arguments in the fall and is expected to render a decision next spring.

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## **CHANGING FACE OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION**

The 2021 report on Religious Freedom in the World, issued by Aid to the Church in Need, details two genres of religious persecution. The first is the most familiar one: violence against people and property (houses of worship). The second is a more subtle way of persecuting the faithful, typically relying on restrictive measures encoded in public policy and law.

Pope Francis is credited with broaching this second strand: non-violent expressions of religious persecution may not be as immediate or acute, but they can be culturally lethal.

The report found that the most persecuted religion in the world is Christianity. As in years past, Muslim-run nations and Communist states continue to be the worst offenders. The evidence shows that Africa, Asia and the Middle East remain hotbeds of Christian persecution in its most violent form.

The report also notes that “the predominance of Christianity is no guarantee that religious freedom is upheld.” Nations that disrespect religious liberty tend to disrespect human

rights in general. For example, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the worst offenders are Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. All three are Marxist-inspired police states.

It is the second type of religious persecution, the more gentle one, that should concern those who live in North America and Europe.

Pope Francis calls it "polite persecution." He is alarmed by the spike in new "rights," cultural norms or laws that relegate religion "to the quiet obscurity of the individual's conscience," or that narrowly confine them to "the enclosed precincts of churches, synagogues or mosques."

The Holy Father has put his finger on a real problem. If Christians in the Middle East need to fear the machete, Christians in the Western world need to fear the media, higher education, activist organizations and government. They are the ones advocating, or imposing, a secular agenda on religious institutions.

The report quotes Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican's Secretary for Relations with States, warning us about "a radically individualistic interpretation of certain rights and the affirmation of 'new rights.'" The report cites by way of example violations of the conscience rights of those in the medical profession. Forcing doctors to end life (euthanasia), or to stop it from developing (abortion), is a growing threat to people of faith in many nations.

Laws aimed at curtailing the rights of religious schools are also a problem. Graduates of some religious colleges and universities are being discriminated against in employment. Parents who object to classroom instruction that explicitly runs roughshod over their religious beliefs (e.g., sex education) are being summarily ignored by administrators. "Hate crime" legislation is being used to criminalize the beliefs of those who hold to traditional moral values.

Another variant of “polite persecution” are attempts to limit the scope of religious liberty, or that undervalue its role in a free and democratic society.

For religious liberty to thrive, it must be afforded a wide scope and not be suffocated by restrictive norms and laws. It is not only offensive, it is downright insulting, to tell the faithful that they can pray in their house of worship. Faith that cannot be exercised in the public square is faith denied. To be sure, no right is absolute, but efforts to narrowly define religion’s reach are stifling.

There would be no liberty, anywhere in the world, had it not been for the Western vision of individual rights and justice before the law. These ideas did not spring from Africa, the Middle East or Asia. It is the West that gave birth to liberty and equality, and it is our Judeo-Christian ethos that shaped it. That is why the movement to secularize our religious institutions makes no sense historically, logically, or morally.

“Polite persecution” of religion may not put us in imminent danger, but in the long run it can accomplish the same end. Campaigns to subvert it are in everyone’s interest.