

POPE'S LEGACY IS SECURE; UNSOLICITED ADVICE SURGES

The news of February 11 that Pope Benedict XVI was resigning hit everyone by surprise. Many were shocked, and with good reason: we live in a world of self-absorbed, ego-driven public figures, thus making the Holy Father's decision seemingly incomprehensible.

Pope Benedict's legacy is secure. His encyclicals showed not only his brilliance, they demonstrated his ability to speak convincingly from the heart. His reach was enormous, touching everyone from intellectuals to young people. Though his critics called him the "rottweiler," most came to love him for who he was.

On the central issues of our day, no one rivaled Pope Benedict XVI. Religion, he emphasized, was as much a public issue as it was a private one. In 2008, he warned American bishops against "the subtle influence of secularism," holding that "any tendency to treat religion as a private matter must be resisted." Similarly, he made it clear that religious freedom was not only a God-given right, it was "the path to peace."

The pope knew religion could be abused, even leading to violence. His much misunderstood 2006 Regensburg University lecture was really about the uncoupling of religion from reason (reason not united to faith also leads to violence).

No one did more to successfully address the problem of priestly sexual abuse than Joseph Ratzinger. Just weeks before he was chosen to be the new pope, he spoke bluntly about this issue: "How much filth there is in the Church, and even among those who, in the priesthood, ought to belong entirely to Him!" His actions made good on his words.

The pope's many references to what he called "the dictatorship

of relativism” was a reminder that one of the greatest threats to freedom today is the abandonment of the search for truth.

In the wake of this news there has been an explosion of unsolicited advice; it will be ongoing for some time. Paradoxically, most of it is coming from those who are not exactly connected to the Church: we are hearing from ex-Catholics, those with one foot out the door, and non-Catholics. Much of their advice has to do with sex, proving once again that it is not the Church that is obsessed with sex—it is the Church’s critics.

Everyone is entitled to offer advice. But those who are no longer practicing Catholics, or who never were, cannot expect a serious hearing. Indeed, the hubris these people manifest is absolutely astounding.

In the coming months, look for the binge of voyeurism, as well as meddling, to continue. Trust us, we will be there to provide a cogent riposte.

HHS RULES REVISED

Revised Health and Human Services (HHS) rules were released on February 1.

In two separate statements, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and its president, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, made plain their interest in pursuing the ongoing conversation with Obama administration officials on the HHS mandate. Their goal, as expressed by Cardinal Dolan, is to reach “an acceptable solution” to this issue.

The Catholic hierarchy wants to broaden the understanding of

what constitutes a religious ministry. Cardinal Dolan also addressed funding for abortion-inducing drugs, sterilization, and contraception, saying “there remains the possibility that ministries may yet be forced to fund and facilitate such morally illicit activities.” The third issue of concern is the right of those who own a business in the private-sector not to fund such activities.

The best of all possible worlds would be for the Obama administration to roll back its mandate, effectively granting the status quo ante. But that seems unlikely. This is not a settled issue, and the door is open for our side to secure the kinds of religious liberty protections we need. However, because serious discussions are under way, we don’t need our side blasting the administration at this juncture. Unfortunately, some groups have done just that.

From the beginning, the Catholic League has been critical of the HHS mandate while being supportive of the delicate negotiations. It is not always an easy walk, but it is absolutely essential

OUR ANTI-CHILD CULTURE

William A. Donohue

Jonathan V. Last is a senior writer at the *Weekly Standard*, the prominent conservative magazine that features Bill Kristol and Fred Barnes. He is also a gifted writer, a strong pro-life advocate, and a man not afraid to challenge the conventional wisdom. His new book, *What to Expect When No One’s Expecting: America’s Coming Demographic Disaster*, is a much needed wakeup call for the nation: we need more children, and we need them now.

It is commonplace for academics and pundits to assume that we have too many people in the world. They paint scary environmental scenarios and trot out mind-numbing data on how our limited resources cannot sustain current rates of population growth. They're wrong. As Last makes clear, it is precisely the current population growth rate that cannot be sustained any longer.

Today, Al Gore likes to wax hysterical over the so-called population problem. A lot of his ideas are traceable to the intellectual godfather of population mania, Paul Ehrlich. His 1968 book, *The Population Bomb*, had a tremendous effect, and it was not salutary. Looking back at its incredible influence, Last labels it "one of the most spectacularly foolish books ever published." He does not exaggerate.

Ehrlich was all over radio, TV, and college campuses in the late 1960s and the 1970s. He was known for proclaiming with dogmatic certainty, "The battle to feed all of humanity is over." Indeed, he predicted that the scale of famines in the 1970s would lead to the deaths of "hundreds of millions of people," all because of overpopulation. But as Last ably shows, Ehrlich's prediction was not only wrong, his "silly book" was wrong when he penned it. To be specific, "Fertility rates in America and across the world had been declining gradually for decades," Last says, "but beginning in 1968 they sank like a stone."

Unfortunately, in many circles data matter less than perception. It was the perception of overpopulation, fed by those like Ehrlich, that allowed elites to see people as the enemy, a foe that must be curtailed. An anti-child culture soon took root, aided and abetted by leaders in education, the media, and government. Foundations also jumped on board, rewarding liberal think tanks with plentiful grants.

The development of an anti-child culture required more than this. Technology played a role. Once the pill became

commercially available in 1960, it would not take long before fertility rates would plummet. In 1973, abortion was legalized, adding more fuel to the fire: sex without consequences was the dream of irresponsible men throughout the ages, and now they could get what they wanted *in the name of women's rights*.

As Last points out, the migration of women into the workforce all but insured the prevalence of two-income families. Consider that in 1965, 44 percent of women worked outside the home; by 1990 the figure was 70 percent (about where it is now). Let's not forget about the sharp increase in shacking up (politely called cohabitation). These arrangements, based on convenience, not commitment, pay lousy social dividends: while 78 percent of marriages last more than five years, only 30 percent of cohabitations last that long. Moreover, the divorce rate for couples who previously lived together is much higher than those who waited until they were married.

The illegitimacy rate (thoughtfully called the out-of-wedlock rate) is also related to these social dynamics. What's new is the fact that the rate of illegitimacy has more than doubled for women over the age of 30. The declining influence of religion surely figures here: the stigma once attached to illegitimacy has all but vanished. The good news is that those young people who are faithful churchgoers are happier in their marriages, and are less likely to divorce. So religion matters.

Is it any wonder why young people are waiting longer to marry, and are having fewer children when they do? This is not the kind of social base upon which a child-friendly society can be built. And it shows: dogs have replaced children as a source of affection in urban America. In 1994, we spent \$17 billion on pets; today we're close to \$50 billion. The same phenomenon is also true in nations that have adopted an anti-child culture, namely Japan and Italy: the "dog mommy" is now a common Japanese stereotype.

But does it matter? Yes, in terms of economic productivity, a declining fertility rate (2.1 percent is the replacement level) is the kiss of death. For senior citizens, the outlook is devastating: every dime paid by workers to the Social Security Trust Fund is spent on *current* retirees—none of it is put away for those who are currently paying into it. To put it another way, thanks to collapsing fertility rates, the huge Social Security bill for the swelling ranks of senior citizens will be paid for by a declining number of workers. The worst is yet to come.

Jonathan Last has given us much to think about; after all, he is really talking about the fate of our nation. While all is not doom and gloom—we are an eternally resilient people—there are plenty of problems built into our demographic profile that cannot be neglected any longer.

ASSESSING THE POPE'S RECORD

- Garry Wills [ex-seminarian]: “What we really need are no priests.”
- James Carroll [ex-priest]: The pope “has seen *only* a solemn obligation to defend the church.” [Italic added.]
- Richard Sipe [ex-priest]: “Certainly, he did a lot, but it was *all* reactionary.” [Italic added.]
- Daniel Maguire [ex-priest]: The “scandal of the papacy [is] one of the last absolute monarchies in a democratizing world.”
- Ronald Lauder, president, World Jewish Congress: “The papacy of Benedict elevated

Catholic-Jewish relations to an unprecedented level.”

- Abraham Foxman, national director, ADL: “He [the pope] was good for the Jews.”
- Rabbi Yona Metzger, Israel’s chief Ashkenazic rabbi: Benedict’s papacy exhibited “the best relations ever between the church and the chief rabbinate.”
- Imam Hassan Qazwini, Islamic Center of America: “I have so much admiration for the pope, for being honest and humble.”
- Nihad Awad, national director, Council on American-Islamic Relations: “We offer the American Muslim community’s best wishes to Pope Benedict XVI.”
- Geoff Tunnicliffe, secretary general, World Evangelical Alliance: “I appreciate his [the pope’s] courage of ideas...and his boldness in warning us of the dangers of moral relativism...”
- Rev. R. Albert Mohler, president, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: “Pope Benedict has offered a brave and intelligent defense of truth against a relativist tide.”

We could offer many other examples, but the point is obvious: embittered ex-seminarians and ex-priests suffer not only from profound anger but their perception of Catholicism makes them look twisted in comparison to the sentiments of Jews, Muslims, Protestants, and others.

HITCHENS IS BACK FROM THE DEAD

Following the announcement that the pope was resigning, Christopher Hitchens was resurrected by Slate and Andrew Sullivan, but it didn't do them any good. They republished a hit piece by the atheist from 2010 that was vintage Hitchens: he was a great polemicist but a third-class scholar. Facts never mattered to him.

Hitchens said the scandal "has only just begun." Wrong. It began in the mid-60s and ended in the mid-80s. Current reports are almost all about old cases.

Hitchens also said Munich Archbishop Joseph Ratzinger (the pope) transferred an offending cleric to another parish. Wrong. Ratzinger's deputy placed the priest in a new parish after he received therapy (the zeitgeist of the time), and even the *New York Times* said there was no evidence that Ratzinger knew about it.

Hitchens said Ratzinger wrote a 2001 letter to the bishops telling them it was a crime to report sexual abuse. Wrong. The letter dealt with desecrating the Eucharist, and the sexual solicitation by a priest in the confessional (the letter cited a 1962 document detailing harsh sanctions).

Hitchens said Ratzinger was obstructing justice when he crafted new norms on sexual abuse in 2001. Wrong. He added new sanctions and extended the statute of limitations for such offenses.

Hitchens said Ratzinger ignored accusations against Father Marcial Maciel. Wrong. It was Benedict who got him removed from ministry and put his religious order in receivership.

Hitchens' hatred of the Church allowed him to swing wildly.

That Slate and Andrew Sullivan resurrected him makes them all look incompetent, as well as vicious.

POPE NEVER “JOINED” HITLER YOUTH

After Pope Benedict XVI announced his resignation, the following persons and media outlets erroneously said that he “joined” the Hitler Youth, without ever noting that it was compulsory:

U.S.: AP Planner; Huffington Post; John Patrick Shanley, *New York Times* blog; *Philadelphia Daily News*; Regional News Network (it said his “defenders” argue he was drafted, implying that it is a rebuttable presumption); timminspress.com; *Sun-Sentinel*; thepeoplesvoice.org; *Washington Post*

England: BBC; *The Guardian*; *The Independent*; politics.co.uk; *Metro*

Canada: *The Globe and Mail*

Ireland: *Daily Mirror*; *Irish Independent*

Here are the facts. Like all teenage boys in Nazi Germany, Joseph Ratzinger was forced to join the Hitler Youth. Unlike many others, he did not attend meetings and deserted when he was drafted into the German army. His refusal to attend meetings brought economic hardship to his family. German left-wing intellectuals like Günter Grass and Jürgen Habermas also were conscripted into the Hitler Youth, yet no one ever accused them of voluntarily joining.

Rabbi David Rosen, director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, said it is “rubbish” to suggest that the pope willfully joined the Hitler Youth. In 2008, following our complaint, even Bill Maher apologized for making this pernicious accusation. In short, it is despicable to smear the pope as a Nazi sympathizer.

“ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT” SMEARS POPE

Following the announcement that the pope was resigning, bashers came out of the woodwork. But the hit piece that aired on “Entertainment Tonight” (ET) was clearly one of the worst.

The segment began with correspondent Brian Ross complaining that many years ago he was slapped on the wrist by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. The occasion for this “brutality” was Ross’ decision to badger the would-be pope as he was walking to a car. Ross said, “It actually stung.” He didn’t say whether he went to the ER.

Next up was a promo for the documentary “Mea Maxima Culpa,” a classic agit-prop film that is strewn with lies. Viewers learned that Pope Benedict XVI investigated, “but without much effect,” the charges levied against Father Marcial Maciel. Another savant asked, “Did Benedict punish him in any way?” To which he exclaimed, “No.” Then why was Benedict credited by his critics for removing Maciel from ministry and launching a Vatican take-over of his religious order?

The ET segment then said “the film implies that the pope...was at the epicenter” of the scandal. Agreed. That’s all the film does is *imply*. When there is no evidence to support outrageous

claims, mud-slinging is all that is left. Similarly, we learn that documents on priestly wrongdoing “are said to be kept in secret Vatican archives.” More innuendo. Absent evidence, conjecture was the best they could do.

Then they rolled out the paranoid attorney Jeffrey Anderson. “There is an enormous worldwide conspiracy—a cover-up at the highest level in the Catholic Church.” Not mentioned was the fact that *all of his lawsuits to get the Vatican have failed*.

ET owes Catholics an apology for this Mafioso-style propaganda.

MAHER AND SNL GET DIRTY

The weekend following Pope Benedict XVI’s announcement, notorious Catholic-basher Bill Maher took another shot at the Catholic Church on his HBO show. The following night, “Saturday Night Live” (SNL) crossed the line in going after Jesus.

It was quite a weekend for the haters. Speaking of the pope, Maher said, “Benedict told them he was going to resign because the Church needs a fresh young face. Somewhere other than a priest’s lap.” He then mocked the Church’s teachings, imploring Catholics to quit. He ended his rant by condemning Catholicism for being “hostile towards women,” comparing the Church to the Taliban.

SNL usually hits above the belt, but the segment it did on Jesus and the apostles was vicious. The skit, “Djesus Uncrossed,” was a take-off of “Django Unchained,” the extraordinarily violent film that has been the source of much controversy. The SNL segment was itself uncharacteristically

bloody; there was also a snide remark by the announcer saying the skit was less violent than “The Passion of the Christ.”

Imagine what might happen if the Catholic Church succeeded in detaining women at St. Patrick’s Cathedral for dressing improperly? Well, the week before Maher’s episode aired, ten women were detained by the Israeli police for praying at the Western Wall wearing prayer shawls (only men are allowed to wear the shawls at the holy site). Imagine how much fun Maher could have with that? But he doesn’t have the guts to go there.

Over the same weekend, Muslims in Egypt set fire to a Christian church—for the second time in a month. The church’s cross was torn down and Christians were stoned by these barbarians. Imagine how much fun SNL could have with that? But they don’t have the guts to go there.

LETTERMAN, THE POPE, AND HIS SHRINK

Twice within the three days following the pope’s resignation, David Letterman got a little too cute for us. When spliced together, it suggested a disturbing pattern.

The first night, Letterman let loose saying, “He’s [the pope] got a chronic neck problem and apparently the chronic neck problem is for looking the other way so many times.” He then said the Vatican “is already holding auditions to see who might be the next pope and we have one of those auditions that’s going on.” Footage was then shown of acrobats taking off their shirts and then performing for the pope; he looks on while rock music is played.

Two nights later, Letterman said that besides looking for someone who is a biblical scholar and at least 60 years old, the Vatican is looking for “a guy who is good at transferring creepy priests.”

Letterman’s attack on the pope and gays was despicable. (Though he didn’t cite gays by name, we know who he meant.) In fairness, just because most molesting priests have been homosexuals, doesn’t mean that most gay priests are molesters.

It is bad enough when someone who carries the baggage of sexual harassment is also guilty of serial adultery. Even worse is when that person throws stones at those accused of sexual wrongdoing.

Perhaps at his next weekly session with his shrink, Letterman will discuss this issue. Meanwhile, he ought to refrain from taking sweeping shots at homosexuals, however nuanced they may be.

FRANK BRUNI IS THE REAL HYPOCRITE

Recently the *New York Times* ran an article by Frank Bruni that was a clear demonstration of his hypocrisy; the week before, he said he doesn’t hate priests, just the Catholic Church and its “appointed caretakers” (a.k.a. the bishops).

In the article, the angry ex-Catholic homosexual ripped about a lot of things Catholic, one of which was a recent boneheaded decision by lawyers for a Colorado Catholic hospital who invoked state law to shield the facility from damages: they argued that because a fetus is not defined as a person, the

facility could not be sued in a “wrongful death” suit involving unborn children. The Colorado bishops disagreed with these attorneys, branding their decision “morally wrong.” End of story? Not for Bruni.

Bruni seized on documents indicating that former Los Angeles Archbishop Roger Mahony failed to report cases of suspected sexual abuse, but his anger was targeted at the Church. For example, at the end of last year when it was reported that Mark Thompson was leaving the top post at the BBC to become the new president of the *New York Times* Company, it was revealed that he pleaded innocent to knowing *anything* about BBC icon and child rapist Jimmy Savile, despite clear and convincing evidence that he lied. Bruni said nothing. Nor did he question Thompson’s innocence, even though it was the result of a BBC internal investigation. Yet he would like the government to go after Mahony, and would mock the idea of an internal probe.

Bruni is a deeply conflicted man. In 1997 he wrote an article about the sexual abuse of minors that was *amazingly sympathetic to the abusers*. He quoted “experts” who said we need to get away from “ironclad roles of villain and victim,” and who said the victim should be told “that somebody cared about you and loved you but *didn’t do it in the right way*” (our italics). Not only is the compassion twisted, it shows that the real hypocrite is Frank Bruni.