ANTI-CATHOLIC ROOTS OF ROE v. WADE

As we approached the 40th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, we recalled the anti-Catholic roots of this infamous decision.

What paved the way for *Roe* was NARAL. Founded by Lawrence Lader in 1969, he knew he had to take down the greatest defender of the unborn, the Catholic Church. One of his close colleagues was Dr. Bernard Nathanson (he would later become both pro-life and a Catholic). Speaking of NARAL's early years, Nathanson said the original members all agreed that anti-Catholicism was "probably the best strategy we had."

Lader, in fact, referred to the Catholic Church as "our favorite whipping boy," making it plain that his goal was to "bring the Catholic hierarchy out where we can fight them." Ever blunt, he added, "That's the *real* enemy." Lader's animus against the Church was so deep that he called it "the biggest single obstacle to peace and decency throughout all of history."

Looking back at those days, Nathanson, who passed away in 2011, said, "I was far from an admirer of the Church's role in the world chronicle, but his [Lader's] insistent, uncompromising recitation brought to mind the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. It passed through my mind that if one had substituted 'Jewish' for 'Catholic,' it would have been the most vicious anti-Semitic tirade imaginable."

NARAL officials shared Lader's hatred and decided to launch a propaganda campaign against the Church. According to Nathanson, they concluded, "it was an easy step to targeting the Catholic Church in its opposition to abortion as making opposition to abortion a pro-fascist, reactionary position."

What NARAL did paid big dividends. Writing for the majority in

Roe, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun cited favorably eight times a book by Lader titled, *Abortion*. The nexus of the ruling was born of bigotry and blood.

"AFTER TILLER" FLICK IS REVEALING

A documentary about those who perform late-term abortions, "After Tiller," previewed recently at the Sundance Film Festival. The directors of the movie, Lana Wilson and Martha Shane, were interviewed by Amy Goodman of *Democracy Now!* about their film. Much of what they said was revealing.

George Tiller was the most maniacal child killer in U.S. history, and it is testimony to his deeds (he was the king of partial-birth abortion) that there are only four "doctors" left in the entire nation who are able to do what he did for a living (three of whom worked with him). "After Tiller" is their story. But it is also our story: these people unwittingly validate the pro-life position.

Goodman discussed how these abortionists are faced with "dilemmas" and "agonizing" decisions. Dr. Shelley Sella uses the term "baby" to speak of the unborn children she readily discards, and director Shane mentions how these women go on "grieving the loss of their child." Best of all is Dr. Susan Robinson who recounts what she tells her patients:

"Look, of course you don't want an abortion. Nobody wants an abortion. You have three choices: You can have a kid that you say you can't take good care of; you can have a kid and give it to somebody else, who you know or don't know; or you can have an abortion, which you think is the wrong thing to do.

Those are your three choices. They all suck."

Robinson is to be commended for her brutal honesty, though she failed to note that the child wouldn't weigh all three choices equally. She also needs to explain why "nobody wants an abortion." Why not? Why is it that none of her patients really want to undergo the surgery she is happy to perform? What makes her patients so different from the patients of, say, back surgeons?

"After Tiller" tries to put a human face on an inhuman practice, and it fails. Here's the proof: the film never shows the patients' faces, though permission was granted.

EVERYONE KNOWS ABORTION KILLS

As *Roe v. Wade* turned 40, we reiterated what we all know: that abortion kills.

"An abortion kills the life of the baby after it has begun. It is dangerous to your life and health." Those are not the words of current pro-life activists—those were the words of Planned Parenthood in 1963. What's changed since then? After all, abortion still kills. What's changed is the decision of Planned Parenthood to float a fiction: it decided that the nascent feminist movement had to include the right of a woman to kill her unborn child. In doing so it broke ranks with the first feminists.

When President Obama invoked Seneca Falls at his inauguration, he sought to call attention to the first women's rights convention in 1848. What he didn't say is that the organizer, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, saw abortion as another case of treating women like property.

Pro-abortion feminists know that abortion kills. For example, Gloria Allred, the famous feminist lawyer, was once asked on TV whether it would be better if there were no abortions. “Not necessarily,” she said. Yet three years later when she took the side of a pregnant woman, Laci Peterson, who had been killed after naming her unborn baby Connor, Allred contended, “The fact that there are two individuals who are dead here, Laci and Connor, that has to be the most important consideration of everything.” She got it right—two individuals were killed.

Hillary Clinton upset some feminists in 2005 when she said, “We can all recognize that abortion in many ways represents a sad, even tragic choice to many, many women.” She didn’t say why abortion is sad, and didn’t have to: everyone knows abortion kills.

IN DENIAL ABOUT ABORTION

Those who support abortion rights are in denial, and for good reason: public opinion has shifted. Indeed, more Americans consider themselves pro-life than at any time since 1973.

Last November, the Centers for Disease Control released a report that found there was a 5 percent decrease in abortions between 2008 and 2009, the largest single-year decrease in a decade. This makes sense given the general revulsion against abortion and the increasing reluctance of doctors to kill children in utero: it takes a special kind of person to do that. This is why New York Governor Andrew Cuomo wants to allow non-doctors to do abortions—they don’t have the same scruples about killing the innocent.

Abortion numbers peaked in 1990 and have been declining ever

since. The number of abortion providers peaked in 1982, and have been steadily declining, though a leveling off has been evident since 2005. The good news is that 27 states and the District of Columbia have experienced a decrease in abortion providers.

The Center for American Progress' (CAP) Faith and Reproductive Justice Leadership Institute is also in denial. It recently issued a statement by a few clergy members that was classic doublespeak. It said they are committed to "justice and dignity for *all* God's people" [our italic], which is obviously a lie. They also said they "affirm the sacredness of conscience…as a foundation of religious liberty." This was also a lie: Sally Steenland, director of CAP's Faith and Progressive Policy Initiative, who touted the statement, cheered when Catholic conscience rights were nixed by the HHS mandate.

Doublespeak and denial. It's what the pro-abortion lobby does so well.

FLAWED ABORTION POLL PROVES MISLEADING

Pew Research Center recently released a survey titled, "*Roe v. Wade* at 40: Most Oppose Overturning Abortion Decision." Here are some examples of how the media reported the findings:

• "Majority Upholds Landmark U.S. Abortion Ruling: Poll," AFP (French News Agency)

• "As 'Roe v. Wade' Turns 40, Most Oppose Reversing Abortion Ruling," Reuters

• “Roe v. Wade at 40: Pew Poll Finds Abortion Not a Key Issue,” *Los Angeles Times*

• “Poll: Most Americans Oppose Reversing Abortion Ruling,” *Washington Post*

• “Survey: Few Religious Groups Want *Roe v. Wade* Overturned Despite Belief Abortion Morally Wrong,” CNN

Only CNN indicated that most Americans are conflicted about abortion. In fairness to the other media outlets, they were not inaccurate; the survey was misleading.

Generally, Pew does excellent research. The problem with this survey is that it gave respondents only two choices: “Would you like to see the Supreme Court (a) Completely Overturn Roe v. Wade or (b) Not Overturn Roe v. Wade.” Either/or questions on complex issues are inherently flawed. Pew should have known this when it learned, in the same poll, that 47% said abortion is “Morally Wrong”; only 13% said it is “Morally Acceptable.” Among Protestants, the figures were 56% to 9%; among Catholics, it was 55% to 9%.

A more sophisticated poll by Gallup last May found that the majority of Americans (52%) want abortion legal *under certain circumstances*; 25% want it legal in all cases and 20% want it illegal in all cases. In other words, only a quarter of Americans support *Roe v. Wade* as it was written. Most want restrictions.

STATE OF RELIGION IN 2013

Bill Donohue

Frank Newport, *God is Alive and Well*, Gallup Press

Gallup has been probing the status of religion in America since the 1940s, and has done some of the finest work of any survey house in the nation. This book is the work of Frank Newport, Gallup Editor-in-Chief. As readers of *Catalyst* know, I hold a Ph.D. in sociology from New York University; Newport's Ph.D. in sociology is from the University of Michigan. Unlike most sociologists, Newport writes with clarity.

There has been much talk in recent years about the increasing diversity of the American population. Indeed, we have an entire diversity industry in this country, one that spawns the private and public sectors. It's really a subset of the multicultural behemoth, and it comes with so many base assumptions that it takes on the trappings of religion itself. Many of those assumptions, it turns out, are wrong.

We may not be a "Christian nation" in any formal sense, but we are a nation that is still dominated by Christians. Indeed, 80 percent of Americans are Christian; 16 percent have no religious identification (more about this later). What about all those new religions we hear so much about from the diversity experts? They exist, but are inconsequential: fully 95 percent of those Americans who profess a religious affiliation are Christian.

Here's another way of looking at it. Of the five percent of those who have a religion and who are not Christian, 1.7 percent are Jews; 1.7 percent are Mormons; .5 percent are Muslims; the rest are other non-Christian. In terms of our religious beliefs, there has also been more constancy than we have been led to believe. While fewer Americans today believe in God as compared to the mid-1940s, the difference is small. Indeed, today only 6-8 percent say there is no God.

For us Catholics, the biggest change has been the large increase in the Hispanic population; Mexicans account for much of it. "An astounding 45% of Catholics younger than 30 are

Hispanic," Newport observes. He is right to say that the Catholic Church would be in trouble today were it not for the Hispanic surge: we've lost a large percentage of cradle Catholics.

Switching religions is not uncommon, and this is especially true among Protestants. More important is the loss of numbers recorded by the mainline denominations; Methodists and Presbyterians have lost half their members since 1967. Overall, we've never had fewer Protestants as a portion of the country (they are just over half the nation's population). Moreover, the term itself is losing traction: fewer Americans who are non-Catholic Christians identify themselves as Protestant.

Jews are mostly non-observant; only a third adhere to their faith. Blacks are the most religious, and they are also culturally conservative. The Republican Party is stacked with churchgoers, and the Democrats are more closely aligned with those of a secularist orientation (blacks being a noticeable exception). Jews and Episcopalians are at the top of the education and income ladder; Baptists, Pentecostals, and Assemblies of God members are at the bottom; Catholics are in between. One in three Jews makes $90,000 a year or more, which is double the national average. Mormons are more likely to be college graduates than are Protestants or Catholics.

The most religious states are in the South (Mississippi is number one); the least religious are in the Northeast and the West (the residents of Vermont are the least likely to attend church). The states with the highest "no religion" percentages are Oregon, Vermont, Washington, Alaska, Maine, Hawaii, and Colorado. Highly religious states are gaining population, led by Texas, Utah and Georgia.

Newport does a fine job exploring social issues that are impacted by age. As expected, the older we get, the more likely we are to be religious. Whether this will hold true for

baby boomers (they are more secular than previous generations), remains to be seen.

The problem with young people has less to do with religion than with marriage. To wit: Fewer young people are marrying and birth rates are declining. This does not bode well for the future, and there appears to be little national discussion of this issue. Not only do public office holders shun the subject, even the clergy have been reluctant to mention it. It is a tribute to the reigning narcissism of our age that children are often seen as an impediment to happiness (dogs are more welcome with young urbanites than children).

Women are more religious than men, and this is something that has been true for an awfully long time. This is not just a sweeping generalization. As Newport demonstrates, "The overall gender gap in religiousness appears in *all* major race and ethnic groups in the U.S." (His italic.) Meaning that white, black, Hispanic and Asian women are more religious than men in their respective racial or ethnic group. Interestingly, this phenomenon is true in other countries as well.

As with other sociological phenomenon, there is a divide between single women and married women, especially married women with children. Women with children are clearly more religious than women without children, and this has nothing to do with age. "When a woman has a child," Newport writes, "the maternal instinct and the religion that goes with it may be accelerated." He then notes as a "confounding fact" that men with a child in the home are more religious than men without a child in the home.

However, the "children's gap" that Newport pinpoints may easily be understood as stemming from the same source: for most men and women, achieving the status of parent is transformative, both psychologically and sociologically. Fathers and mothers surely express their protectiveness in different ways, but one way they come together is in their

newly forged interest in the alembic qualities of religion for their offspring. To put it differently, parenting is an inherently protective enterprise for both men and women.

After detailing that women are more religious than men, Newport opines that the increasing role of women clergy in the mainline Protestant denominations, and the absence of female priests in Catholic and conservative Protestant faiths, suggests that the latter may find themselves with increasing tensions. But it is precisely in the mainline churches that fewer and fewer *women as well as men* are attending services. We know from many studies that the more conservative the religion, the lower the dropout rate; conversely, the more a religion's teachings mirror the secular ideas of the dominant culture, the more members it loses. If religions with women clergy are the key to success, then the Episcopalians should be booming. In fact, they are in a deep descent.

There has been much chatter about the "nones," the category of Americans who claim no religious affiliation. Celebrating this phenomenon have been activists in the atheist community, as well as many religion reporters. It is a credit to Newport that he carefully examines the spike in the "nones" population.

Contrary to what many secular pundits have said, it is not true that the 16 percent of Americans who have no religious identification are atheists or anti-religionists. Indeed, roughly half of them profess a belief in God. Newport suspects, with good reason, that the large increase in the "nones" may mask something else: it may very well be that in the 1950s, for example, that those who lacked a religious affiliation were less likely to identify themselves as such (there is comparatively little social pressure today exerted on those who are not religious to claim affiliation).

Does it matter whether someone is religious or not? Most decisively, and not just for individuals—it matters for

society. The most religious among us are also happier and healthier than the least religious. Healthier not just physically, but emotionally: those who are “very religious” are the least likely to suffer depression, and the least likely to experience stress. In short, the overall wellbeing score sorts out this way: at the top are the “very religious”; in the middle are the “moderately religious”; at the bottom are the “nonreligious.”

Newport’s explanation makes good sense. The “very religious” are more likely to take care of themselves, more likely to find solace in their religion in times of need, and more likely to experience a strong sense of community with their co-believers. This holds true across religions.

What is perhaps the most controversial part of the book, and also the most fun to read, is Newport’s discussion on how the business community and government might tap into the strongly positive role that religion has on wellbeing. He is correct to note that business and government are quick to recommend that we stop smoking, start exercising more, eat a more healthy diet, and the like. Should they not be just as vociferous in offering incentives for employees to become more religious? I would take it further: If those of us who take our religion seriously are less likely to be a healthcare burden on others, should we not be rewarded in some way?

The idea is sound, but finding a way to implement it is not easy. Corporate America may find itself in a pickle trying to negotiate a workable proposal, and the problems for government include serious First Amendment issues. But we could have a combined PR campaign: If the captains of industry and leaders in government were to use the bully pulpit exhorting Americans to take religion more seriously, it could pay huge dividends. At the very least, it would make us a more religion-friendly nation, something we badly need.

Although it is not a subject Newport addresses, related to his

analysis of the “very religious” is the role these men and women play in serving the dispossessed. We know from the work of Arthur C. Brooks, as well as Robert Putman and David Campbell, that those who are religious give more in terms of their time and money to the needy than secularists do. The 2012 survey by the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* also underscored this vital point. It cannot be said too often that those who holler the loudest about the horrors of poverty do the least about it. Their idea of helping the poor means picking the pocket of the taxpayer, not coughing up their own dough.

So if we take Newport’s evidence of the social benefits that the “very religious” offer, and splice it to the data on their charitable giving, what we have is a strong case for promoting religion throughout our society. In other words, the hostility to religion as expressed by many cultural elites is not only offensive, it is socially injurious.

Anyone interested in this subject will find much to savor in Newport’s well-written, and highly authoritative, account.