

INVENTING CONTROVERSY

In a recent Religion News Service story, David Gibson said the following in regards to the Paris murders:

“In finding no justification for the deaths of the *Charlie Hebdo* editorial staff, [Cardinal Timothy] Dolan *seemed* to part ways with another prominent New York Catholic, Bill Donohue of the Catholic League, who *essentially* said the newspaper editors had brought on their own slaughter” (Donohue’s *italics*). The verbs dropped by Gibson were telling: he couldn’t quite state that the New York Archbishop parted ways with Donohue on this subject, so he inferred that they have. Moreover, he inferred that Donohue blamed the victims. Donohue offered a more manly rejoinder.

- “Killing in response to insult, no matter how gross, must be unequivocally condemned.” That was the first sentence Donohue wrote on this issue. (January 7)
- The next day Donohue wrote that “the murderers are fully responsible for what they did and should be treated with the full force of the law. Nothing justifies the killing of these people.”
- “The only people who are responsible here are the murderers, the Muslim barbarians.” Donohue said this to Megyn Kelly on January 8 on her Fox News show, “The Kelly File.”
- “Now who is responsible? The Muslim thugs are responsible.” Donohue said this to Don Lemon on his CNN show on January 9.

Bill Donohue could go on and on. Evidently Gibson, and others, have a problem understanding why there is nothing inconsistent about fingering the Muslim murderers as responsible for the crime, and discussing the irresponsible record of those who deliberately and persistently insulted Muslims.

MEET THE REAL CENSORS

On October 13, 1998, Bill Donohue held a demonstration in the street outside the theater that hosted “Corpus Christi,” the Terrence McNally play that depicted Christ having sex with the apostles. Donohue did not seek to have the government censor the play, but there was a protest of his right to protest the play. The *New York Times* commented on his demonstration: “The protest began with a fiery speech from William A. Donohue, the president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. Holding a bullhorn inside an area barricaded by the police, Mr. Donohue shouted criticisms at the opposition. ‘You are the real authoritarians at heart,’ he said. ‘We’re the ones that believe in tolerance, not you phonies.’”

The *Times* noted that Donohue assembled 2,000 people on a rainy night and was greeted by a counter-demonstration of 300. Who protested his right to protest? People for the American Way, the National Coalition Against Censorship, PEN American Center and Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. They wanted to censor Donohue.

In 2001, when Indiana University-Purdue University hosted “Corpus Christi,” Donohue was asked to join 11 state lawmakers and local residents in a lawsuit against the university. He refused to do so, citing his objections to censorship. Instead, Donohue asked the school’s chancellor to allow the distribution of a statement he wrote objecting to the play, making sure that all attendees got a copy. He agreed. That’s how Donohue operates.

POPE AND PRESIDENT AGREE WITH US

Bill Donohue:

"People have a legal right to insult my religion or somebody else's, but they don't have a moral right to do so" ("The Kelly File," Fox News, 1/8/15).

Pope Francis:

"You can't provoke, you can't insult the faith of others, you can't make fun of faith..." ("After Paris attacks, Pope Francis speaks out against insulting religions," Reuters, 1/15/15)

President Obama:

"And if, in fact, we defend the legal right of a person to insult another's religion, we're equally obligated to use our free speech to condemn such insults" (Remarks by the President at the National Prayer Breakfast, 2/5/15).

POPE SIDES WITH CATHOLIC LEAGUE

Pope Francis condemned the killings of the Paris cartoonists while on board the papal plane to the Philippines, but he also drew a line in the sand. "You cannot provoke. You cannot insult the faith of others. You cannot make fun of the faith." While he denounced violence against those who offend us, he also said that if his friend, Dr. Alberto Gasparri, the organizer of papal trips, were "to use a curse word against my

mother, he can expect a punch. It's normal." He added, "We cannot make a toy out of the religion of others. These people provoke and then [something can happen]. In freedom of expression there are limits."

Bill Donohue is obviously delighted that the pope has taken the same position that he has on this issue. Radio chatterbox Hugh Hewitt doubted whether a single bishop would side with Donohue. What does he have to say now?

Regarding the pope's quip about punching those who offend us, here is what Donohue recently said to Megyn Kelly: "If a woman has been beaten by her husband for 20 years and one day she goes out and she blows his brains out, I think we're going to say she's a murderer and we ought to try her. On the other hand any sensible person would say why don't we look at the whole issue here."

Mindless comments have exploded over this issue. On January 14, Salman Rushdie told an audience at the University of Vermont, "The minute I hear someone say, 'Yes, I believe in freedom of speech, but...' I stop listening." Similarly, Victor Davis Hanson criticized Donohue on January 15 for his "de facto attack on unfettered free speech." Apparently, both of these sages are opposed to laws that prohibit libel, slander, treasonous speech, harassing phone calls, copyright infringements, false advertising, etc.

Even worse is *USA Today*. After Donohue explicitly rejected its request to write an op-ed defending blasphemy laws in the Middle East, the paper ran an excerpt of his remarks as an opposing view to its opposition to these laws. This is more than mindless—it is malicious.

POPE'S "PUNCH" QUIP AND MORE

When the pope was on a plane coming back from Brazil in 2013, he said, "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?" Over 900 news stories quickly appeared, the majority of which were dishonest: "Who am I to judge?" was all they quoted. Pundits were even worse: they said the pope was asking us to be non-judgmental about homosexuality.

By contrast, newspapers from January 16 gave scant coverage to what the pope said on January 15 about the Paris murders. The pope said, "In freedom of expression there are limits." He condemned the Paris murders, but he also condemned the needless provocations. "You cannot provoke. You cannot insult the faith of others." As an example, he said that if his friend, Dr. Alberto Gasparri, were "to use a curse word against my mother, he can expect a punch. It's normal."

The disparity in news coverage can be explained on ideological grounds: the media liked what the pope said on the plane to Rome two years ago but they did not like what he said on January 15 aboard the plane to the Philippines. The reaction of pundits to his "punch" quip is not ideological: it offended many conservatives as well as liberals.

What explains the pundits' reaction? Humorlessness. A video of the pope's remarks shows him standing up, microphone in hand, with Dr. Gasparri standing to his right. The pope was clearly jesting—he feigned a punch at him as he made his quip. Gasparri was cracking up, as were others. But to the humorless, he committed a grave sin. They need to get a life. Too many conservatives are just as stiff as liberals these days.

What the pope said, and how he said it, is not hard to understand. He was simply stating the obvious: when we

intentionally and needlessly insult people, don't be shocked when it triggers a strong response. That's common sense, a property that is not at all common these days.

ISLAMISTS SOUGHT TO KILL THE POPE

A couple of weeks ago, the former Philippine National Police (PNP) chief, Getulio Pascua Napenas, testified before the Philippine Senate about terrorist activities. He discussed how Zulkifli bin Hir, a.k.a. Marwan, planned to assassinate Pope Francis during his recent trip to the Philippines.

"Just recently," Napenas said, "during Pope Francis' visit to the Philippines, we have information that Jemaah Islamiyah [Al Qaeda's regional arm], in coordination with Marwan, had planned to construct a bomb to be detonated as the papal convoy drove down T.M. Kalaw Street in Manila on January 18, 2015. These reports were not confirmed neither admitted nor denied by the PNP. The fact, however, remains that there exists this information."

The military received information about the planned assassination and altered the route of the papal motorcade. Marwan was killed on January 25 in a police operation.

Napenas identified who Marwan was. "Marwan was the maker of bombs delivered for usage to several terrorist groups like the Abu Sayyaf. He was a well-known supplier of bombs of various terrorist groups. He was also teaching terrorists how to create bombs....Marwan was also in charge of the Southeast Asian and Indonesian terrorist group Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia or KMM. The KMM is a part of the international terrorist

organization, Jemaah Islamiyah or JI, of which Marwan was believed to be part of its central command.”

“In other words,” Napenas said, “Zulkifli bin Hir a.k.a. Marwan is the most notorious bomb expert not just here in Southeast Asia but also in the entire world. This is the reason why he was named one of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s most wanted men in the world after the fall of Osama bin Laden.”

Two quick points: a) The absence of media coverage of this assassination attempt on the pope is startling, and b) the curse of radical Islam is a worldwide evil that must be destroyed.

ATHEIST KILLS MUSLIMS IN NORTH CAROLINA

Craig Stephen Hicks turned himself in after shooting three young Muslims near the campus of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. Hicks is a rabid atheist who is known for his hatred of Christianity and Islam. Indeed, he saw the two religions as similar. He recently asked on his Facebook page “why radical Christians and radical Muslims are so opposed to each others’ influence when they agree about so many ideological issues.”

Hicks is a big fan of British atheist Richard Dawkins. Dawkins condemned the killings but he said nothing about Hicks’ atheism or his influence on him. Dawkins needs to open up about this issue. Hicks supports Atheists for Equality and other gay activist associations. Similarly, we need to know more about this linkage.

Facebook Likes listed by Hicks include the Southern Poverty Law Center and Freedom from Religion Foundation.

The Southern Poverty Law Center specializes in naming individuals and groups that allegedly promote hate speech. It listed Dr. Ben Carson, a respectable conservative activist, and currently lists the Family Research Council, a respectable conservative organization, as haters. It would be instructive to know why it thinks that Hicks, a true hater, was drawn to its work.

Freedom from Religion Foundation has a moral obligation to speak up. After all, it spends most of its time demonizing religion. What might Hicks have learned from them?

We also need to know why the Associated Press and the *New York Times*, unlike all other media outlets, refused to mention the killer's atheism. Had Hicks been a Catholic activist, they would have highlighted the connection.

MAHER CURSES THE POPE

Pope Francis implores us not to insult other people's religions, and Bill Maher responds by saying, "He's dead to me now. Oh yeah, F*** the Pope."

Maher can say what he wants about Bill Donohue—he went off on him big time—but to resort to obscene language condemning the pope is a new low, even for Maher.

Maher is showing signs that he is deeply disturbed: It is not normal for anyone to lash out at the Holy Father for simply asking us to show respect for others. It is also not normal that such vile commentary be treated as if it had comedic

value.

The media blackout of this ugly episode is telling. Not a single mainstream media outlet mentioned Maher's vicious attack, and even the reaction from second and third tier sources was mostly mute.

In 1992, Sinead O'Connor went on "Saturday Night Live" and ripped up a picture of Pope John Paul II, saying, "fight the real enemy." Her antic occasioned a serious outburst of criticism. What Maher did during a recent episode was far worse, but it triggered no response. When outrageous behavior is greeted with indifference, we are going down the wrong road. History bears Donohue out.

We sent this news release to officials at HBO, as well as to those who work at its parent company, Time Warner. Why they would want to be associated with a man like Maher anymore defies rational explanation.

HOW THE *L.A. TIMES* DECIDES THE NEWS

On January 17, a crowd of 15,000, many of them young people, took to the streets of Los Angeles to participate in the first "One Life" march, a demonstration in support of the rights of unborn children.

On February 1, 10 people demonstrated outside the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels to protest the proposed canonization of Father Junipero Serra, the priest who brought Christianity to California.

Guess which event the *Los Angeles Times* ignored and which one it covered?

Across the nation, the *Washington Post* covered the Los Angeles pro-life march, and the newswire in Times Square highlighted it. But the *L.A. Times* effectively censored it, even though the demonstration was held one block from its headquarters. Its omission of this huge event, and its flagging of the tiny protest, are a reflection of its politics: the *Times* is pro-abortion and not exactly Catholic-friendly.

The non-event protest was the work of the ill-named Mexica Movement. In fact, there is no movement: there is just a handful of Christian-bashing, European-hating activists. In 2000, a Canadian newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, counted a “few dozen members” who showed up to protest Elton John’s appearance at Tower Records in Los Angeles (he allegedly sang a “racist song” on the soundtrack of the film, “The Road to El Dorado”). In other words, 15 years ago this rag-tag group marshaled more activists than it did just recently. Some “movement.”

The few who protested Father Serra showed how low-class they are when they compared the priest to the devil and Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez to Hitler. For good reasons, Gomez is well-liked by minorities, though his few detractors garner the news. Shame on the *L.A. Times* for profiling them.

MEDIA BLACKOUT OF MARCH FOR LIFE

The big media outlets are overwhelmingly in the pro-abortion camp, so it hardly surprises to learn that ABC and NBC never

mentioned the March for Life in its nightly news broadcast; CBS made a passing reference to it in a story on the controversy over a Republican bill on abortion. The only newspaper to run a story on the demonstration was the *Washington Times*.

We have known for three decades that those who work in the most influential media jobs have little interest in religion and are huge proponents of abortion rights. The two issues don't have to go together—there are principled atheists such as Nat Hentoff who are pro-life—but usually they do.

The 1986 book by S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda Lichter, *The Media Elite*, which was based on a 1980 survey of the media top brass, found that 94 percent of Americans professed a belief in religion and that 86 percent said religious beliefs were important to them; only 50 percent of the media elite held religious beliefs and 86 percent said they seldom or never go to church. Moreover, 90 percent of the elites were solidly pro-abortion.

The most politicized commentary on the March for Life was the piece by Michelle Boorstein in the *Washington Post*. She used the March as a platform to discuss the way activists who are not part of the pro-life movement are seeking to crash the event. Almost all of her 1018-word article was not on the big demonstration; rather, it was on the way the social justice crowd is trying to force its way into the pro-life rally.

Bill Donohue knows of no social justice conference or event that has ever had any interest in welcoming pro-life speakers. But there are plenty of social justice groups, such as NETWORK, that refuse, as a matter of policy, to ever address abortion. Then there is the National Coalition of American Nuns, another social justice group: it is openly pro-abortion, and has been for decades. Pro-life Catholics need to take note.