

# SAN FRANCISCO SUED; ANTI-CATHOLICISM CITED

On April 4, the Thomas More Law Center sued the City and County of San Francisco, and two local officials, on behalf of the 6,000 members of the Catholic League who live there; two Catholic individuals (one of whom is a Catholic League member) are also named in the suit.

At issue is an incredible resolution that was unanimously passed on March 21 by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. It was the most frontal assault ever levied against the Catholic Church by government officials in recent memory.

Because the Catholic Church supports the right of children to be raised by fathers and mothers, and not by various other combinations, the Board of Supervisors' resolution called the Church's teachings on adoption "hateful," "discriminatory," "insulting" and "callous," adding that it "shows a level of insensitivity and ignorance." The resolution also said, "It is an insult to all San Franciscans when a foreign country, like the Vatican, meddles with...this city's existing and established customs and traditions..."

The Constitution, as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Warren Burger once said, "affirmatively mandates accommodation, not merely tolerance, of all religions, and forbids hostility toward any." The San Francisco Board of Supervisors, however, did just the opposite. They showed nothing but hostility to the Catholic Church, holding in contempt its right to craft its own teachings. "Make no mistake about it," Bill Donohue told the media, "resident Catholics have been told, however indirectly, that the government does not look kindly on their right to publicly express their religion."

Donohue ended his comments with a thought experiment: "Imagine

what would have happened if the Vatican had condemned the San Francisco Board of Supervisors for ‘meddling’ in the internal affairs of the Catholic Church simply because the two entities disagreed on a public policy issue? Separation of church and state cuts both ways, and when agents of the state accuse the members of any religion of interfering in municipal affairs—merely because the two sides hold contrary views—the ineluctable result is the creation of a chilling effect on the rights of the faithful.”

Whether we win or not is not as important as the necessity of letting these bigots know their bigotry is going to cost them.

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## **“CODE” SET TO OPEN**

“The Da Vinci Code” is set to open May 19 amidst much controversy. The Catholic League remains adamant in its request for a disclaimer at the start of the film indicating that it is a fictional account.

Our beef all along has had less to do with the film’s director, Ron Howard, than with the author of the book upon which the movie is based, Dan Brown. He recently prevailed in a London court case against two authors who sued him for copyright infringement. We labeled that outcome “inconsequential” to our interests and took the occasion to denounce all the parties to the dispute as anti-Catholic frauds.

While Howard remains mute, one of the film’s co-producers, Brian Grazer, recently said on the “Today” show that the movie is “informed fiction” (he said it three times). He even went

so far as to say, “We don’t feel it’s factual, it’s not historic, but it’s informed fiction, and it’s a thriller.” We were similarly pleased to note that a Sony spokesman dubbed the movie “a work of fiction that is not meant to harm any organization.” Now, we said, “the ball’s in his [Howard’s] court.”

We have been asked by other organizations to join with them in their protest of the movie. However, we don’t want to get sidetracked from our goal, which is to secure a disclaimer. We wish our allies well, but it is important for us not to be tied to several different agendas. In any event, Ron Howard’s reputation is on the line, whether he likes it or not.

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## **“DA VINCI CODE” PEDDLES LIES**

As Catholic League members know, what is most pernicious about “The Da Vinci Code” is the book upon which the script is based: the author, Dan Brown, peddles one lie after another; now his book of lies is available in paperback.

The biggest lie of them all is the one claiming that the divinity of Jesus was made up out of whole cloth in 325 at the Council of Nicea. In fact, there are 25 references to the divinity of Christ in the Gospels and more than 40 references in the New Testament. Not only that, the letters of Paul were written in the 40s and 50s—earlier than the Gospels. These writings are much closer to the time of Jesus than the so-called Gnostic Gospels, and even those books—which were excluded from the New Testament—regarded Jesus to be the Son of God.

If Constantine concocted the idea that Jesus was divine in the 4th century, then how does one explain the Apostles Creed in

the second century? After all, it explicitly mentions the divinity of Jesus. Brown says Constantine decided which books to include in the New Testament when, in fact, he had nothing to do with it. Indeed, the Council of Nicea didn't address this issue.

As historians have detailed, the Council of Nicea was called to decide how to understand Jesus' divinity, not whether he was divine. The question before the council was whether Jesus was the first being created by God (as erroneously assumed by a priest named Arius), or whether He was co-eternal with God the Father. As Christians everywhere now believe, Jesus was begotten—not made.

Another lie floated by the book and the movie is the one which posits that Jesus married Mary Magdalene. There is absolutely no evidence to support this position. Brown says it would have been highly unlikely for a Jewish man to be celibate, but again he is wrong. We know that Paul the Apostle was celibate, as was John the Baptist. Indeed, so were the Essenes—the Jews who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Speaking of which, Brown contends that the Dead Sea Scrolls import new information about Jesus. Really? The truth is they never mention Jesus! The Dead Sea Scrolls tell us about the Essenes—the Jewish community that lived at the time of Jesus and in the same place.

### **William A. Donohue**

Throughout the book, Brown tells us about the evil machinations of the Vatican and how it consolidated its power base under Constantine. But there was no Vatican in the 4th century—it didn't exist until the 14th century.

The book also claims that witch-burning led to 5 million women being killed by the Catholic Church, but the number that most scholars accept is somewhere between 30,000-50,000. Not all were women and, more important, most were killed by civil

authorities, not the Church.

The pages of history are strewn with figures like Dan Brown. After all, what bigger prize is there for any author than to challenge The Greatest Story Ever Told? Whether their motive is bigotry or ego, or both, the goal is to sow seeds of doubt about Christianity. The grand prize, of course, would be to witness its eventual demise. Though all such efforts have failed, as will this one, we live in a time when a ready audience exists to swallow this moonshine.

There are three reasons why so many people continue to believe that *The Da Vinci Code* is true: (a) postmodernism (b) bigotry and (c) the scandal in the Church.

The Western world is in the grips of a postmodern culture, one that refuses to acknowledge the existence of truth. Such a culture of radical skepticism explains why the tabloids that are displayed at the supermarket check-out counter continue to feature wild stories about aliens, kids born with three heads and women who get pregnant at seven or seventy. Many conclude that while not all of this may be true, some of it must be, otherwise it wouldn't be in print. Ergo, some of what *The Da Vinci Code* says is probably true.

Anti-Catholic bigots love to believe the worst about the Church, and nothing is more appealing to them than the exposure of sordid tales about a secretive and manipulative hierarchy. It's the Christians who have been duped, they say, not them. And their arrogance is so visceral that no book disputing their beliefs will shake their faith: they literally hate the Catholic Church.

Finally, the scandal that has rocked the Church is ample fodder for these bigots. The climate is ripe to believe the worst about Catholicism, and unfortunately some members of the clergy have made a bountiful deposit to this milieu.

Remember, John Calley, the film's co-producer, has dubbed it

“conservatively anti-Catholic.” That there is not a single producer in Hollywood who would brag about his association with a movie that is racist or anti-Semitic speaks volumes about what we’re up against.

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## BIG MARKET FOR CATHOLIC-BASHING BOOKS

*by Robert P. Lockwood*

Anti-Catholic books have been dominating the *New York Times* bestseller list lately. Three books riddled with anti-Catholic themes and imagery have been listed at the same time. All are novels.

Unless you have been hiding under a rock for over a year, you’ve heard of *The Da Vinci Code*, the hardbound bestseller now available in paperback. Opie and Forest Gump’s movie based on the book will be released in May.

Without getting the publicity of *The Da Vinci Code*, two other books have climbed the bestseller list as well.

A newer entry—at number five on the list in March—is *The Last Templar*, by Raymond Khoury (Dutton). A previous hardbound bestseller and ranked in the top five in paperback sales at the same time is *The Third Secret* (Ballantine Books) by Steve Berry.

Since these are novels, the authors and publishers can glide over the anti-Catholic themes that permeate the books by responding that these are just stories. But all three have a pseudo-intellectual wink to them as if they are rooted in

established facts of history that give legitimacy to the tales they tell.

Because of the movie connection Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* has received most of the attention. But the proliferation of these additional anti-Catholic novels proves an ancient adage: there is money to be made in appealing to visceral anti-Catholicism.

The plots in *The Third Secret* and *The Last Templar* center on intrepid couples running around the globe tracking down hidden historical truths that will prove the Catholic faith to be fake.

In *The Last Templar*, our intrepid couple track down the diaries of Jesus, which had been discovered in the Holy Land during the Crusades by the Knights Templar. The diaries reveal that all that stuff about miracles, salvation and the Resurrection was a fabrication of the Church to consolidate its power.

In *The Third Secret*, Steve Berry has an intrepid couple discovering that Church leadership had hidden the true revelation of the Blessed Mother at Fatima, namely that birth control and abortion are fine, priestly celibacy is wrong and the ordination of women right, and that homosexual marriage is a noble thing.

After revealing her message, Berry has the Blessed Mother say to the children at Fatima: "Go my little ones and proclaim the glory of these words."

The Church, according to *The Third Secret*, had hidden the true revelation of Fatima in order to maintain its grip on power that would be undermined if the Blessed Mother contradicted 2,000 years of defined truth. So the Blessed Mother had to return to Medjugorje to give the same lecture in the late 20th Century.

Berry has also added another book—*The Templar Legacy*— which has made it to the hardbound bestseller list. And *The Da Vinci Code* has gone paperback as well, no doubt in preparation for the movie.

In commenting on Berry's *The Templar Legacy*, Publisher's Weekly reports that the book "soft-pedals the genre's anti-Catholicism."

Which is a pretty clear understanding from even a secular perspective of what all these books are essentially selling.

Both *The Third Secret* and *The Last Templar* portray the Catholic Church as ruthlessly destroying anyone that would reveal these secrets. In *The Last Templar* there is a murderous monsignor working for a brutal cardinal. In *The Third Secret*, Berry has a murderous priest who reports to a murderous cardinal.

Berry's book goes to the greatest lengths—two popes commit suicide, and a good priest is murdered by the ruthless monsignor while a future pope looks on, then gives absolution immediately after for the crime.

Berry also has the curious figure of a not-particularly sympathetic priest who is sleeping with the female protagonist while undergoing a trial for excommunication led by the evil cardinal.

We also find out that the "good pope" who commits suicide has also had an ongoing love affair, and the point of all this is to show the evil of priestly celibacy and the pain it has allegedly inflicted on the world. Without celibacy, we are led to believe, the Church would never harbor such love-defeating teachings on contraception and abortion.

These books in one way or another sell three anti-Catholic stereotypes that are as old as the Reformation. The first anti-Catholic legend is that the Catholic Church forcibly repressed a true Christianity that had existed since the days



of the Apostles. It was a common post-Reformation propaganda point that there was a pure Christianity subversively maintained over the centuries that served as a counterpoint to the apostolic claims of the Church. The real Church was this "invisible Church."

Khoury's book takes that anti-Catholic tenet and gives it a New Age twist. He describes the alleged purity of the original teachings of a thoroughly human Jesus mouthing pious platitudes. Berry puts in the mouth of the Blessed Mother a laundry list of contemporary secular grudges against the Church that can be found in any news story: abortion, contraception, homosexual marriage, celibacy and a male-only priesthood.

In each case, however, is the clear idea that the Catholic Church had repressed the true teachings of Jesus and is simply the invention of the Roman Emperor Constantine in the Fourth Century.

It's a gnostic gospel being preached based on nothing more than a wise teacher, rather than a revelation of God.

Berry is at least more straightforward—attributing to the Virgin Mary the kinds of things that are routinely said by the Church's most irresponsible critics.

The books, however, are not arguing from a Protestant perspective. Evangelicals who might be tempted to sample the "puritan pornography" in these books should understand the secular interpretation of this long-standing anti-Catholic tenet.

The secular interpretation has it that in a rigged Church council at Nicene in 325 under the Roman Emperor Constantine's thumb, a belief system surrounding Jesus was created by putting an official seal on false Scripture, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

This marked the beginning of a ruthless suppression of various gnostic writings that told the real story of Jesus. That's not an interpretation that the average evangelical would favor.

The problem is that Brown and Khoury within the context of their novels present this combination of post-Reformation and New Age gnostic propaganda as undeniable fact, not something merely made-up to fit a fictional plot. Berry simply confirms essentially gnostic beliefs by the *deus ex machina* of the Blessed Mother at Fatima.

The second anti-Catholic legend permeating these books is that the Church is in this only for power. All its teachings, all its beliefs, all its sacred devotions exist to consolidate a nefarious hold on worldly power and wealth.

It is a given in both books that the Church is fighting and has fought the revelation of their alleged secrets not because it would prove Christian teaching false, but because in doing so the power of the Church would be undermined. Power—particularly power exercised over women—is a more important motivation to the Church than truth itself.

That is why the Church will respond so murderously. Khoury sees it as a compelling motivation of the cardinals. Berry makes the trappings and exercise of power the sole motivation of a newly elected pope.

Khoury portrays a Church that first paid extortion, then viciously suppressed the Knights of Templar so that their secret would be maintained and the Church could still exercise power. Berry has the Church repressing the Blessed Mother's revelation because it would mean that the Church taught error for 2,000 years, thus undermining magisterial authority.

Which leads to the third anti-Catholic theme that permeates these books. Basic to anti-Catholicism has always been the charge that Church leadership knows that it is teaching falsehood. According to these books, not only does the

Catholic Church teach and believe falsely, it does so knowingly.

Khoury has his Church leadership arguing that it knows the Scripture to be false, but that it maintains its beliefs solely because people can find some glimmer of hope in an otherwise senseless world. Berry has the pope knowing the teachings of the Church are false, but holding on to them because the applecart of power cannot be overturned.

The anti-Catholic themes propagandized in these novels are part and parcel of America's cultural baggage. They are still used to counter Church positions in the public arena without ever addressing the actual positions themselves.

Khoury's book is the least offensive of the two, if only because of a plot twist at the end and at least a vague acknowledgment that faith accomplishes some good in the world. (Although he is at pains to point out that it is a faith not grounded in reality.)

Berry, on the other hand, is probably the only author of an anti-Catholic book that would stoop to use the Blessed Mother as his *deus ex machina* to promote abortion.

Berry in particular seems to evidence a real anti-Catholic animus though, on his website, he "credits the nuns who taught him in elementary school with instilling the discipline needed to both craft a novel, then sell it to a publisher." And I'm sure some of his best friends are Catholic, too.

People make their points with anti-Catholic legends disguised as facts. And these books encourage those legends.

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# EASTER BUNNY EXPELLED

Tyrone Terrill, the human rights director at St. Paul City Hall in Minnesota, evicted a toy rabbit, colored eggs and a sign with the words “Happy Easter” from the premises. The display, which was in the lobby of the municipal building, was expelled on the grounds that the Easter Bunny might offend non-Christians.

Bill Donohue’s response was picked up by national media outlets:

“We are sending Tyrone Terrill the ‘Supreme Bunny Suit’ from [buycostumes.com](http://buycostumes.com). The adult-sized suit includes ‘a faux white fur bunny suit with attached tail, black velcro closure, a pair of mitts, shoe covers with velcro straps, and a full over-the-head character mask’; expected date of delivery is Monday.

“It is our hope that once Tyrone dons the costume, he will realize that even non-Christians are not offended. And we urge him to read and digest a copy of the First Amendment, preferably while munching on some rancid carrots.”

We are delighted to note that our actions inspired many Christians in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area to flood the lobby of the building with all kinds of Easter gifts.

No word from Tyrone on whether the suit fits.

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# MAKING EASTER DISAPPEAR

The politically correct police would like to make Easter disappear, which is why they favor Spring Egg Hunts to Easter Egg Hunts. We decided to track when this phenomenon occurred, and here's what we found.

There were no reported Spring Egg Hunts in the 1980s until 1988 and 1989; there was one in each of those years. From 1990-1994, there was an average of 2.6 Spring Egg Hunts. From 1995-1999 the average jumped to 10.8. And from 2000 to date, the average is 28.

What's driving this? A local official living in Milford, Connecticut confessed before Easter that "One person said we'd offend someone if we call it an Easter Egg Hunt, that's all it took." Isn't that sensitive? No one complained yet the decision to neuter the event was done anyway. Those who think this is a blue state trend, think again: four towns in Georgia have censored Easter events by calling them "Children's Egg Hunt," etc.

Look for Irving Berlin's "Easter Parade" to be renamed the "Spring Parade," though we doubt the author of "I'm Dreaming of a White Holiday" would approve. We are delighted to know that "Page Six"—the celebrity page of the *New York Post*—picked up this story on April 15. Shame on those responsible for trying to make Easter invisible.

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## DNC'S NEW WEBSITE DEVOID OF

# ANTI-CATHOLIC LINK

On April 8, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) unveiled its new website. Gone from the site is the links page which directed users to various allied organizations. Among them was an anti-Catholic group, Catholics for a Free Choice.

For the past two years, the Catholic League has been pressing the DNC to drop its link to Catholics for a Free Choice. During this time, we inundated the DNC with protest letters and placed ads in many newspapers across the nation, including the *New York Times*, demanding an end to this invidious association. There was also a confrontation between William Donohue and one of the DNC's lawyers over this matter. Now the DNC has decided to sidestep the issue by simply dumping all links from its current website.

Here's what we told the media:

"The DNC deserves no credit for this action. It brazenly offended Catholics for years by embracing a Catholic-bashing organization. But now that its leader, Senator John Kerry, is in trouble with Catholics for a whole host of reasons, prudence dictates that the DNC distance itself from anti-Catholic bigotry."

We also noted an AP story that mentioned how the DNC's revised webpage "provides links to help Democrats meet other Democrats, through Meetup.com..." In re-sponse to the question, "What do people do at a Meetup?", the following answer was given: "Chat, chew the fat, shoot the breeze, sling the bull, babble, cackle, chatter, gab, yak, yammer. No big whoop."

We concluded that they can yak all they want—all we ask is that they keep their Catholic-bashing babble to a minimum.

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# ANOTHER LAME ATTEMPT TO DEBUNK JESUS

Since 1996, there has never been a year when the media didn't offer us the same Easter present: the Jesus that Christians believe in is a hoax (see pp. 10-11 for a detailed account). During this period, ABC aired three shows that raised questions about the divinity of Jesus; *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, the Discovery Channel and National Public Radio (NPR) each made two contributions; and PBS aired one. And on April 2, NBC's "Dateline" made its first presentation.

The guest on "Dateline" was Michael Baigent, whose new book, *The Jesus Papers*, has as its subtitle, *Exposing the Greatest Cover-Up in History*. The book debuted in late March, a date the publisher, Harper, said was chosen more than a year ago to coincide with Easter. How thoughtful.

Baigent, who unsuccessfully sued another fraud, Dan Brown of *Da Vinci Code* fame, contends in his latest fable that Jesus wasn't divine (just a handy carpenter) and wasn't born of a virgin birth. Naturally, he married Mary Magdalene and sired a child. This is old hat by now, but what makes this book so special is the revelation that Jesus didn't die on the cross—he simply took off to recuperate. Get it? Now we know why the tomb was empty.

"In other words," we told the press, "those who crucified Jesus were incompetent. And all Jesus needed was a little R&R and he was good to go—to Home Depot or Lowe's—wherever he could continue his trade."

Baigent claims his new book is non-fiction. But he once told

us that the 1982 book that he co-authored, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, was non-fiction; he now admits it is “historical conjecture.” In other words, he lied.

When Baigent was recently asked where he got the proof that Jesus was alive in A.D. 45, he said he got it from reports about a book he cannot find (we’re not making this up!). When asked how he knows the tomb was empty because Jesus needed some R&R, he said, “Unfortunately, in this case, there are no facts.” Put differently, the guy is a crook and “Dateline” has been had.

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## DEATH FOR CATHOLIC CONVERT AVERTED

Abdul Rahman, an Afghan man who converted to Roman Catholicism 16 years ago, went on trial in Afghanistan in March because he abandoned Islam. Under the Afghan constitution, which is based on Shariah law, any Muslim who rejects Islam must be sentenced to death. Fortunately for Rahman, the security court dismissed the charges against him (they suspected he was insane), and he was able to flee to Italy.

When we learned of the pending trial, we jumped on this issue immediately by issuing the following comments to the press:

“Hosnia Wafayosofi, an official at the jail where Abdul Rahman is imprisoned, boasts that ‘We will cut him into little pieces.’ Rahman, whose own father wants him killed, has no lawyer, no rights of any kind. The prosecutor, Abdul Wasi, calls Rahman a ‘microbe in society’ who ‘should be killed.’ The judge who is trying the case says, ‘If he doesn’t regret his conversion, the punishment will be enforced on him. And



the punishment is death.’ And what has been the response of American elites?

“Unlike the Italian and German governments, which have waged a vocal protest against this act of barbarism, the administration of President George W. Bush has been quite mute. Yet in his second inaugural address, President Bush said, ‘We will encourage reform in other governments by making clear that success in our relations will require the decent treatment of their own people.’ Was Bush just blowing smoke? Bush also said, ‘All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know the United States will not ignore your oppression or excuse your oppressors.’ Then why not begin with Abdul Rahman?”

We also noted that as of March 22, the *New York Times* had run one story on Rahman, consisting of three sentences. The *Washington Post* had run two stories, for a total of nine sentences. And the Council on American-Islamic Relations said nothing until later that day: only after it consulted with 13 Islamic scholars did it object to killing Rahman.

“American troops did not die in Afghanistan so that the new government could kill Christian converts,” we said.”

Even after Rahman was freed, we kept the pressure on. Here is our news release of March 30:

“The idea that 500 Catholic priests, or Protestant ministers, or Jewish rabbis would assemble at a church or synagogue demanding the murder of a person who abandoned Catholicism, Protestantism or Judaism for Islam is unthinkable. But just yesterday, 500 Muslim clerics assembled at a mosque in Afghanistan calling for the death of Christian convert Abdul Rahman. Moreover, the idea that the U.S. Congress would condemn the release of an Islamic convert is equally unfathomable, yet the Afghan parliament wasted no time blasting Rahman’s release to Italy yesterday. As such, this

issue is far from over.

“The Catholic League fully supports House Resolution 736 expressing the will of Congress that religious liberty be respected in Afghanistan. The legislation, which was co-sponsored by Rep. Michael Fitzpatrick, denounces the unconscionable assault on Abdul Rahman’s religious liberties, and thereby commits American lawmakers to take a more active role in monitoring basic human rights in Afghanistan. To be plain, American troops did not lose their lives in Afghanistan so that Christian converts could be killed by the new government.

“The U.S. has yet to grant asylum status to Rahman, and has instead pretended that this is a parochial concern. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said the other day that the issue of Rahman seeking asylum in the U.S. was ‘being handled as a private matter.’ It’s too late to call this a private matter—it involves American lives and money—and attempts to do so will be greeted by the American people with derision.

“We are delighted to note the courageous and timely response from Pope Benedict XVI on the matter of Abdul Rahman. The pope is a role model for the leaders of all nations.”

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## **“SOUTH PARK” CREATORS SHOULD RESIGN**

Matt Stone and Trey Parker, the creators of “South Park,” got angry at executives at Comedy Central for not airing an image of Muhammad and so instead they showed an image of Jesus, and President Bush, defecating on the American flag.

Bill Donohue hit the airwaves on CNN's "Showbiz Tonight" and the Fox News Network's, "Your World with Neil Cavuto," hammering Stone and Parker. As Donohue told the Associated Press, "The ultimate hypocrite is not Comedy Central—that's their decision not to show the image of Muhammad or not—it's Parker and Stone. Like little whores, they'll sit there and grab the bucks. They'll sit there and they'll whine and they'll take their shot at Jesus. That's their stock and trade." Donohue said that the two creators of the show should resign in principal for being censored.

Comedy Central is not to be trusted and neither should Parker and Stone.