

BATTLES RAGE ON BOTH COASTS; CULTURAL ELITES EXPLODE

In the matter of just a few days, the cultural elites on both coasts suppressed the speech of the Catholic League.

First it was the New York artistic community that reacted with intolerance; then the Hollywood community got in the game. In both instances, the elites started by bashing Catholicism, and then resorted to censorship when we challenged them. Rarely has there been such an explosion of bigotry and hypocrisy on display within a matter of days. That all of it was uncoordinated made it all the more disturbing.

On September 27, the Catholic League held a press conference outside the Edward Tyler Nahem gallery in midtown Manhattan. We were there to protest an exhibit by Andres Serrano featuring "Piss Christ," the infamous photo of a crucifix submerged in a jar of the artist's urine. After addressing the media, Bill Donohue sought to see the exhibit but was stopped in the building's lobby by gallery officials. He was the only person denied. His offense? They objected to the content of his remarks to the media.

The West Coast example involved two confrontations. In September, we learned that the cable TV channel, FX, was scheduled to air "American Horror Story: Asylum" on October 17. The entire series depicts a habit-wearing promiscuous nun who beats inmates in a home for the criminally insane; for good measure, a doctor tortures his patients in this evil Catholic institution.

Donohue decided to write a full-page ad critical of the series, seeking to place it in *The Hollywood Reporter*. We were led to believe that everything was fine, including our credit card info, but then we learned via an e-mail on October 1 that

the ad had been rejected. Lynne Segall, the publisher, nixed it saying the ad's message "was not appropriate."

The next day, October 2, we contacted *Variety*. Once again, everything from the initial exchange to our credit card info was deemed just fine. But then we learned via an e-mail that the ad had been rejected because of its "mudslinging" title ("FX Trashes Nuns"). Donohue refused to amend it (*Variety* has run many stories with the word "trashes" in the title); thus the ad never ran.

We got the last word. On October 15, two radio stations in Los Angeles, KFI (it carries Rush Limbaugh) and KTLK (the favorite liberal station) ran several taped statements by Donohue that were critical of FX, *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety*.

It is not at all surprising that it was the elites in New York City and Los Angeles who waged war on Catholicism. It's what they do.

We paid for the ads with funds raised from the October appeal.

DONOHUE JOINS BECK

On Election Day, Bill Donohue will appear on set with Glenn Beck in Dallas to discuss developments in the presidential election.

Donohue will join Beck between 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. ET on his new station, TheBlaze TV (it is available on DISH network and by online subscription). Because the discussion will occur while the polls are open throughout the nation, the focus will be on likely scenarios at both the national and state level.

There is much to discuss. At the national level, Catholics

have been implored by the bishops to weigh the Health and Human Services mandate and its likely effects on religious liberty. Besides health care, pressing policy matters involve the budget deficit, economic growth, the national debt, immigration, education, and the on-going problems in the Middle East.

At the state level, issues range from gay marriage and abortion to the Blaine Amendment and doctor-assisted suicide. Virtually all House seats are up for election, and many seats in the Senate are at stake. Economic issues dominate in all states.

Donohue has appeared with Beck many times before, but this is the first time he has joined him on Election Day. Catholic League members can take heart knowing that their views will get a fair hearing. Moreover, Beck and Donohue have been at the forefront of the religious liberty issue.

Donohue returns from Dallas to go to a Philadelphia dinner on November 9 where he will receive an award from the Catholic Leadership Institute.

Bill Donohue was scheduled to be in Dallas with Glenn Beck on Election Day but could not make the trip due to the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.

MASTERS OF INTOLERANCE

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

William A. Donohue

Why is it that the same people who boast of their open-mindedness tend to be the most close-minded of all? Do they

not see how utterly hypocritical they are? My experience with those who work in places where liberals dominate—the artistic community, Hollywood, the media, education, and publishing—lead me to believe that they are the masters of intolerance. If I had any doubts, they were fully erased after recently encountering major players in the arts and Hollywood.

In 1989, Andres Serrano displayed a photo he had taken two years earlier of crucifix in a jar of his urine. For this magnificent contribution to “art,” he received \$15,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts. Which means you paid for it. When I learned that “Piss Christ” was coming to New York at the end of September for one month, I decided to stage a press conference outside the Edward Tyler Nahem gallery. I might have ignored it were it not for two things: the venue and the timing.

The gallery is located on 57th Street between 5th and 6th Avenues. For those not acquainted with New York, this is the most expensive rent district in the city, just two blocks from the Plaza Hotel, Central Park, and the high-end jewelry stores. In other words, this was not some dump in SoHo: it was the artistic establishment of New York sticking it to Christians. Cheering for them, of course, were other segments of the cultural elite, e.g., the *New York Times* fawned over it.

It was the political elites who made the timing of the exhibit so offensive. President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton were busy condemning an anti-Islam video that they (erroneously) said sparked Muslim riots in the Middle East. When Todd Starnes of Fox News called the White House asking if there would be a statement condemning Serrano’s anti-Christian art, he got no response.

So when Muslim sensibilities are offended, the cultural elites *and* the political elites are ever so sensitive: the former refuse to show any images that might offend Muslims, and the

latter condemn them. But when it comes to anti-Christian fare, the cultural elites celebrate it and the political elites refuse to condemn it. Indeed, in an article that described the anti-Islam video, the *New York Times* did not show a still from the film, but it did show a picture of the dung-on-the-Virgin Mary “art” that was shown at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1999! None of this is by accident.

Those who hailed the Serrano gimmick were not too pleased with my “art.” At a press conference, I showed up with a bobblehead of Obama sitting in a jar of faux feces (it was actually brown Play-Doh); I even took my *magnum opus* on the Lou Dobbs show. Why? If Serrano got \$15,000 back in the 1980s for his “art,” my contribution should be worth about \$50,000 today, correcting for inflation. I wanted to ask Serrano (he was present at the exhibit) if he would help me write a grant, but the gallery goons wouldn’t let me in to see his masterpiece.

The gallery not only censored me, they lied about me. A spokeswoman for the gallery told Sharon Otterman of the *New York Times* that (a) the police showed up after they were summoned (b) 30 or so protesters barged into the building, and (c) Serrano confronted me to discuss the controversy but I balked. It was all a lie.

There were no police there. None. Otterman confirmed my account by calling the police: the only cops who showed up came *after* we left, and they did not come at the behest of the gallery (they came to check on things because we had contacted them a week before the press conference). Otterman spoke to Serrano and he admitted that we never met. Finally, we taped what happened and the video shows no one barging into the building (we posted it on our website).

If this wasn’t enough, we were then turned down by both *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety* after we sought to publish an ad I had written objecting to the FX anti-Catholic show, “American Horror Story: Asylum.” As I’ve said many times

before, Hollywood hates Catholicism, and these three incidents offer more proof. First, a TV series portrays evil nuns and other Catholics as sadists, and then we are stopped from criticizing it by the two most prominent Hollywood magazines. We didn't give up, of course (we never do): we did an end-run around them all by blasting Hollywood on Los Angeles radio stations.

Keep in mind that while Hollywood continues to smear Catholics, it never stops offering a positive portrayal of homosexual characters on TV. Those who say, "relax, it's just TV," need to explain why Catholics are not the ones depicted as the good guys.

The cultural elites on the West Coast proved to be just as intolerant as their colleagues on the East Coast. Bigotry and censorship are hallmarks of intolerance, and this is what the artistic community in New York City and the Hollywood community in Los Angeles have in common. That they receive at least tacit support from political elites in Washington, D.C. makes the story even sicker.

RYAN, BIDEN, AND THE BISHOPS

The following article is adapted from Bill Donohue's article on this subject that was posted on Newsmax.com on September 26.

The conventional wisdom holds that both vice presidential candidates, Rep. Paul Ryan and Vice President Joe Biden, are roughly equal in terms of their Catholic standing: Ryan is good on the life issues, but weak on social justice; the reverse is said to be true of Biden. But is it a draw? Not even close: only one of these Catholics—Biden—has been

criticized, reprimanded, and sanctioned by the bishops. Make that 17 bishops.

Before detailing all the trouble Biden has gotten into with the bishops, some debunking of the conventional wisdom is in order. Sister Simone Campbell, executive director of NETWORK, a Catholic dissident organization, is responsible for much of the mythology about Ryan.

Sister Simone began her speech at the Democratic National Convention saying, "Good evening. I'm Sister Simone Campbell, and I'm one of the 'nuns on the bus.'" The fact of the matter is there were hardly any "nuns on the bus" (only two made the entire trip, and at no time were there more than six). In other words, the "nuns on the bus" story was a colossal media scam.

Sister Simone made more news when she said, "the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops stated that the Ryan budget failed a basic moral test, because it would harm families living in poverty."

To put it politely, Sister Simone overreached. There was one bishop, Stockton Bishop Stephen Blaire, who wrote a letter on April 16 to two congressmen, Rep. Frank D. Lucas and Rep. Collin C. Peterson, leaders of the Committee on Agriculture, asking them to resist "unacceptable cuts to hunger and nutrition programs." Nowhere in the letter is Rep. Paul Ryan's name mentioned.

Bishop Blaire is the chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and he did speak on their behalf. But by saying on national television that the bishops had condemned the Ryan budget, Sister Simone was, in the words of theologian George Weigel, being "either woefully ignorant or willfully malicious."

After distorting the record, Sister Simone proclaimed, "We

agree with our bishops.” What is so remarkable about this statement is that it comes from the leader of NETWORK, a group hardly known for practicing fidelity to what the bishops say. In fact, when Sister Simone was asked at the Democratic National Convention if she supports laws that ban abortion, she took a page from her hero, President Obama, and replied, “That’s beyond my pay grade. I don’t know.”

NETWORK was founded in the early 1970s by radical nuns professing a strong belief in social justice but no interest whatsoever in abortion. It is so radical and disrespectful of what the bishops say that it has butted heads many times with the Church hierarchy in the U.S., as well as in Rome. In 1983, it took the side of a dissident nun who refused to denounce publicly funded abortions; when the nun refused, the Vatican stepped in to force her to leave her order. The very next year, Sister Marjorie Tuite, a founder of NETWORK, was herself threatened with expulsion from her order for her pro-abortion activities. I mentioned all of this to Sister Simone on a radio show earlier this year but she refused to comment on it.

In other words, it is not Rep. Ryan who has been called out by the Vatican for his dissident views—it is Sister Simone’s group.

The nonsense that Ryan’s budget was condemned by the bishops was floated by Dana Milbank in the *Washington Post* on April 27, just eleven days after Bishop Blaire’s letter was released. In his article, Milbank said, “the bishops sent letters to Congress” about Ryan’s budget. But the link he provides is only to Blaire’s letter. Similarly, on August 11, Melinda Henneberger wrote in a Washington Post blog that “the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops took the unusual step of repudiating the deep cuts envisioned in Ryan’s budget”; the link is to Milbank’s piece. Then on August 20, Robert P. Jones did an article for the same site saying “the bishops sharply repudiated the Ryan budget”; predictably, he linked to Henneberger’s post.

The Washington Post earns an "A" for getting its talking points down with precision; too bad it fails the test for accuracy. Their grade is actually worse than this: not only is it inaccurate to suggest that more than one bishop was upset with Ryan's budget, it is intellectually dishonest not to mention those bishops who have spoken favorably about the Wisconsin congressman's work. And unlike Bishop Blaire, Ryan's supporters mentioned him by name.

Just before Milbank got the anti-Ryan train running, Ryan's own bishop, Robert Morlino of the Diocese of Madison, wrote a column commending him. Bishop Morlino cited Ryan's "accomplishments as a native son, and a brother in the faith." In a subsequent radio interview, he said Ryan is an "excellent Catholic layman of the very highest integrity," adding that he "understands the principles of Catholic social teaching" and applies them "very responsibly."

More recently, Bishop Thomas J. Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois spoke in Green Bay, Wisconsin, saying, "Congressman Ryan is undoubtedly correct in asserting that the preferential option for the poor...does not entail 'a preferential option for big government.'" Similarly, the president of the USCCB, Timothy Cardinal Dolan of the Archdiocese of New York, has written favorably of Ryan's commitment to Catholicism.

When it comes to Vice President Joe Biden, it's a different story. To put it mildly, he has incurred the wrath of the bishops, and on more than one occasion.

Biden got into big trouble with the bishops after his infamous 2008 appearance on "Meet the Press." Tom Brokaw asked Biden if he agreed with the Catholic Church on abortion. "I'm prepared as a matter of faith to accept that life begins at conception. But that is my judgment. For me to impose that judgment on everyone else who is equally and maybe even more devout than I am seems to me is inappropriate in a pluralistic society." He also said that in the Catholic Church there has long been a

“debate” on when life begins.

Following the interview, the bishops weighed in with vigor:

- Cardinal Justin F. Rigali, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Pro-Life Activities, and Bishop William E. Lori, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Doctrine, issued a joint statement “to correct the misrepresentations” of Church teachings advanced by Biden. Indeed, they argued that “the Senator’s claim that the beginning of human life is a ‘personal and private’ matter of religious faith, one that cannot be ‘imposed’ on others, does not reflect the truth of the matter.”
- Speaking explicitly of Biden, as well as those Catholic politicians who share his position, Bishop Samuel Aquila of Fargo, North Dakota said, “they really should not be presenting themselves for Holy Communion because it is a scandal.”
- Bishop Gregory Aymond of Austin released a statement by the bishops’ Administrative Committee, the highest authority of the USCCB outside the conference’s plenary sessions, affirming support for the position as outlined by Cardinal Rigali and Bishop Lori. “As teachers of the faith, we also point out the connectedness between the evil of abortion and political support for abortion.”
- Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput said of Biden that “I certainly presume his good will and integrity and I presume that his integrity will lead him to refrain from presenting himself for Communion.”
- Bishop Paul S. Coakley of Salina said, “Senator Biden confused the matter [of abortion] further by saying that he ‘knows when (life) begins for me,’ but that this is a ‘personal and private issue.’ That life begins at conception is a scientific fact, not a personal or subjective or philosophical or religious opinion.”
- Denver Auxiliary Bishop James D. Conley joined with

Chaput in accusing Biden of “poor logic” and “bad facts.”

- Milwaukee Archbishop Timothy Dolan accused Biden of taking it upon himself to “explain Catholic teaching on abortion to the nation—and blundered badly.”
- Bishop W. Francis Malooly of Wilmington labeled Biden’s position “simply incorrect.” He said, “The Didache, probably the earliest Christian writing apart from the New Testament, explicitly condemns abortion without exception.”
- When Bishop Joseph F. Martino of Scranton was asked what he would say to Biden, he restated his position that “No Catholic politician who supports the culture of death should approach Holy Communion.” He added, “I will be truly vigilant on this point.”
- Bishop R. Walker Nickless of Sioux City slammed Biden for using a “false argument to justify [his] cooperation with evil.”
- Boston Archbishop Sean Cardinal O’Malley complained that he finds it “disturbing when politicians and others try to dismiss us [the bishops] as people with merely an ecclesiastical or religious sectarian point of view or opinion.”
- Bishop John Ricard of Tallahassee-Pensacola said Biden’s position indicated “a profound disconnection from [his] human and personal obligation to protect the weakest and most innocent among us: the child in the womb.”
- Bishop Edward Slattery of Tulsa blasted Biden for his “erroneous beliefs” about the beginning of life and for creating a “division” between “privacy and social responsibility” that was “tenuous.”
- Archbishop Donald Wuerl of Washington chastised Biden for not recognizing that “When life begins is not a matter of faith, but a matter of science.”

These 15 bishops are not alone. Prior to the “Meet the Press” fiasco, Biden was banned by his own bishop from speaking in

Catholic schools. In 2006, Wilmington Bishop Michael A. Saltarelli also intervened to stop a building that was to be named after Biden at the Catholic high school he attended. In 2008, he said that if Biden were to become Vice President, he would still be barred from speaking at Catholic schools.

Subsequent to his “Meet the Press” interview, Biden was told in 2010 by Bishop Emeritus Henry Gracida of Corpus Christi that he “crossed the line as a Catholic” when he lobbied for a pro-abortion law in Kenya. Referring to Biden’s two aneurysms, the bishop said, “Perhaps God, who knows whether or not Biden’s brain was permanently damaged by his brain surgery, will not judge him too harshly, but the Church, which does not have that kind of knowledge should certainly speak out and reprimand him.”

The record is clear: there is absolutely no comparison between the Catholic standing of Rep. Paul Ryan and Vice President Joe Biden. Biden’s public defiance of Catholic teachings has gotten him into hot water with the bishops. Ryan, on the other hand, has never been punished by the bishops, and has indeed won the plaudits of many.

MORALITY AND MARKETS

Fr. Robert Sirico

“Freedom rightly understood is not a license to behave like spoiled adolescents but rather the noble birthright of creatures made in the image of God,” says Fr. Robert Sirico in his new book *Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy*. “As long as we refuse to sell this birthright for a mess of materialist pottage, hope remains.”

Fr. Sirico, president of the Acton Institute, recently talked to *Catalyst* about how markets can be made moral, the Christian's role in health care, and why consumerism is incompatible with capitalism.

What does it mean for a market to be "moral"?

FR. SIRICO: The human person is the center of the market so the morality of a market is rooted in the morality of the human person. The market itself is neither moral nor immoral, but it becomes a vehicle for the moral and economic expression of the acting human person, who has the free will to choose good or bad. A moral market is therefore a market in which humans are making moral economic choices.

What does theology have to do with economics?

At its most fundamental level, economics is not about money—it's about human action. How we answer the big questions—Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? What is man?—has an enormous impact on every facet of our lives, including how we work and buy and sell, and how we believe such activities should be directed. Much more than numbers are at stake here: intrinsic human dignity, flourishing and rights hang in the balance. That is why our theological commitments, particularly how we understand man, influences how we think about economics.

But economists don't usually incorporate such theological commitments into their theories do they?

No, not directly. But their theological commitments are reflected in their anthropological presupposition, a view of man that I'd call *homo economicus*—economic man.

Homo economicus is the theoretical construct that appears frequently in the work of mainstream economists. Economic man is self-interested. His sole purpose in life is to maximize utility. He never stops calculating costs and benefits, and

he's anxious to render these in monetary terms so they can be put on a balance sheet and bought or sold in a market. The results dictate the choices he makes in life.

While *homo economicus* serves a purpose in the economics literature, we need to be careful not to mistake this economistic caricature for an accurate representation of man. In real life, people are motivated by much more than what economists describe as "maximizing utility"—especially where "utility" is understood in narrowly materialistic terms. What might be called "the economic truth of man" is true enough, but it is not the whole truth about who we are as human beings. That is why a theological understanding of man—a Christian anthropology—is necessary for developing a truly moral economy.

How would starting with a Christian understanding of man, rather than economic man, change our approach to economics?

Any man who was only economic man would be a lost soul, a physical being without transcendence. And any civilization whose markets and other institutions were filled by such economic men would soon enough be a lost civilization. Fortunately, this is not how human beings really are. We find ultimate fulfillment not in acquisition but in developing, sharing, and using our God-given creative capacities for good and giving of ourselves to others—for love.

While this is a Christian understanding of man, it's not just the pie-in-the-sky thinking of a Catholic priest. There is hard data to back it up. For instance, researchers have found that sudden, unearned wealth does not permanently alter one's level of happiness. What does tend to make people happier is earned success—in other words, the feeling of accomplishment that comes with a job well done, a job others find valuable.

Failing to understand that man is more than economic man leads to major errors in addressing social problems. If we treat

only the symptoms of social ills—slapping more meddlesome regulation, government spending, or targeted tax cuts onto the surface of a problem without nourishing the wellsprings of human happiness—our solutions will fail. We need the more robust understanding of man that comes from the Christian tradition.

In your book you argue that the market can do a better job of taking care of people's material needs than can a government safety net. Can you explain what you mean?

One thing we know about markets from a wide array of economic studies is that the less taxed and regulated a society is, the more prosperous it is. We also know the material needs of people are best met in societies that are prosperous, both in terms of the abundance of economic opportunities available and the amount of superfluous wealth that can be used generously to support the needs of those unable to provide for themselves.

How would you respond to critics who claim that defending capitalism is defending "big business"?

Too often when people object to "capitalism" what they are really against is the effects of crony-capitalism—the close relationships between "big business" and "big government." I'm against this too.

Those who act from within the bureaucratic mentality are looking to conserve or advance their sphere of power and so will favor their friends and political allies. When linked to business, this dynamic in effect politicizes economics so that the businessperson is no longer attempting to serve the consumer but is attempting to increase their political power. The result is that businesses hire lobbyists to approach politicians and their representatives to curry favor in order to do business. This is not a phenomenon of markets but of politics.

Many Christians are skeptical about capitalism because it seems to encourage consumerism. But in your book you argue that consumerism actually makes capitalism “impossible over the long term.” What do you mean?

Many confuse a market economy with consumerism because they see a buy-buy-buy mentality as the outcome and goal of economic liberty. But consumerism is the muddled idea that only in having more can we be more. Consumerism is wrong not because material things are wrong. Consumerism is wrong because it worships what is beneath us.

Far from a synonym for capitalism, consumerism makes capitalism impossible over the long term, since it makes capital formation all but impossible. You can't have sustainable capitalism without capital and you can't have capital without savings. A consumer culture isn't a saving culture; it isn't a thrift culture. It's too fixated on buying the next toy to ever delay gratification, to ever save and invest for the future. If people are running around spending everything they've earned, you may have a consumerist society but you don't have a capitalist one.

Another common perception is that advocates of free enterprise are supporters of the greed and selfishness popularized by the atheist novelist Ayn Rand. Even GOP vice-presidential candidate Paul Ryan has expressed his admiration for Rand. What is the attraction of her philosophy and why, as you mention in your book, is this problematic?

Since the 1940s Rand has had a strong appeal, especially to the young in search of heroes and idealism. Her idea of man is noble, and she is second to no one in defending freedom in the face of the totalitarian impulse, which she saw firsthand as she grew up in the newly formed Soviet Union. She also wrote passionately about man's creative capacity and entrepreneurial potential, and about the need for social conditions that protect man's freedom to be creative. These themes can be

riveting and inspiring in Ayn Rand's novels—they inspired me when I was in my twenties. But her foundational belief in radical individualism—an autonomy that precludes social obligation and responsibility—is obviously problematic.

Fortunately, most of the people I know who read her when they are young outgrow her. I suspect that is true of Congressman Ryan too. When he talks about what he likes about Rand all his references are to what we might call the “Good Rand.” Ryan is certainly not a “Randian.” In fact, Ayn Rand would despise much of what Ryan believes in, such as his pro-life views and his Catholic faith. It would not take a great imagination to construct what Rand would say about Ryan.

Rand rejected the Christian view of man, which holds that society consists of unique, unrepeatable humans, each made in the Image of God in such a way that each contributes something to society that no other individual could. People complement each other through their varied strengths and weaknesses so that all may survive and flourish.

In your book you discuss the role the Church played in developing hospitals and the modern health care system. How has the role of Christianity in health care changed in recent decades?

The Christian, and specifically, the Catholic influence on health care has suffered as government has taken a larger role. The establishment of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965 was perhaps the defining moment in the federal government's becoming a permanent player in the health market. Since then the government's participation has increased to the extent that there is virtually no truly free market for health care in the United States today. The effect has been that the role that Christian mercy once played has been replaced by anti-Christian values. By legalizing, condoning, and then subsidizing practices such as abortion and, increasingly, euthanasia, the federal government sends the message that

these practices are morally permissible, and even a basic human right.

Consider the recent attacks on Catholic conscience by the Obama administration. The infamous HHS mandate that Catholic hospitals provide morally objectionable “services” such as contraception and abortion drugs is essentially a requirement that they give up their Catholic identity.

Unfortunately, the public has been slow to recognize this threat. Catholic health providers face the daunting challenge of convincing people the federal government is wrong in condoning and supporting such immoral actions. The Church will also have a difficult time continuing to provide the high quality health care that has emerged over the centuries, while attempting to avoid the federal government’s backlash. The challenges that we face—and let us be clear, this involves Catholics and non-Catholics alike—and the social unrest they may cause, should highlight the importance of religious freedom and economic freedom for the preservation of a just and flourishing society.

[Back to Top](#)

INVENTING JESUS’ WIFE

Recently a story broke that Harvard professor Karen King possessed a piece of papyrus that stated that Jesus once remarked, “My wife.”

From the very beginning there was an odor of inauthenticity to this claim. The evidence that Jesus had a wife could be ascertained by using a magnifying glass to read a 3.8 x 7.6 centimeter inscription made on a scrap of papyrus. There was

no information about when the scrap was discovered. There was no information about where it was discovered. There was no information about how it was discovered. There was no information about the context in which the words were written. And there was no information about the owner.

What we did know is that two of the three scholars who first examined the scrap questioned its authenticity; they were unsure whether it was real or a fraud. The third scholar went right to the heart of the matter questioning its grammar, translation and interpretation. There wasn't much left after that.

The reigning dogma in the academy is that words can have multiple meanings. For King, however, the words, "My wife," are so clear that they "can mean nothing else." Yet according to some biblical scholars, "sister-wives," as they are called, were not uncommon in the early centuries: these were women who performed domestic duties but did not have sexual relations. And since we know nothing of the context in which the words were allegedly said, King's confidence was unwarranted.

This reminded us of the "Jesus Tomb" hoax from a few years back. That is why we left it to the experts—including those at the Vatican—to pick apart King's claim, and pick it apart they did.

King has been known for her fertile imagination. For example, she previously claimed that Mary Magdalene was one of the apostles. Even better, in the book in which she made this extraordinary claim, she "rejects his [Jesus'] suffering and death as the path to eternal life."

In the 1990s, King sent her mentor a book she wrote on feminine images in the gospels. She later learned that he "had utterly no interest" in it and quickly pawned it off on his wife, unread.

So after first inventing an apostle for Jesus—who the *divinity*

professor says is not the Savior—King invented a wife for him. Her generosity, if not her scholarship, is beyond dispute.

MORMON-BAITING

Deal Hudson, president of the Pennsylvania Catholics Network, was recently cited in a *U.S. News* blog story on the anti-religious antics of Catholics for Obama: calls were being made by the group questioning the religious beliefs of Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney. In a phone message, the group asked prospective Catholics voters, “How can you support a Mormon who does not believe in Jesus Christ?”

Should Christians vote for a Jewish Democratic candidate for president? Should they be made to feel guilty if they even gave it a second thought? How would the media react if Catholics for Republicans called prospective voters asking, “How can you support a Jew who does not believe in Jesus Christ?”

The fact that Catholics for Obama would ask this question is obscene.

Because he was the beneficiary of these calls, President Obama should have condemned them. He did not. When pressed by *U.S. News* about this issue, the Obama campaign stated that a candidates’ religion is off limits, and denied that they were behind the calls, but did not condemn them.

PHONY ATTACK ON RYAN'S CATHOLICITY

In an October op-ed article that ran in the *New York Times*, Fordham theologian Michael Peppard failed in attacking the Catholicity of Paul Ryan.

Pro-abortion Catholics have long sought to equal the playing field with pro-life Catholics by arguing that there really isn't much of a difference between their side and the other. It has never worked. And it didn't work for Michael Peppard either.

Vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan is pro-life, and Vice President Joe Biden is pro-abortion. Biden has never found an abortion he couldn't justify, and Ryan would ban all abortions save for rape, incest and the life of the mother. In the mind of Peppard, there is no difference between the two: both depart from Catholic doctrine.

Not so fast. Pope John Paul II said it was acceptable for Catholics to vote for a pro-abortion candidate in a race against another pro-abortion candidate, providing that the former is less extreme and efforts are made to persuade him to adopt a pro-life position. In other words, Catholics who exercise the virtue of prudence have no problem voting for a man whose position on abortion would save the lives of over 1 million babies a year. This is especially true when compared to a man who would not save one baby out of the 1.2 million killed annually.

In Professor Peppard's vision, a driver who goes 56 in a 55 miles an hour speed zone is equally guilty of speeding as the one who goes 106. Technically, that may be true, but in reality, only a fool would equate their culpability.

PHONY PETITION v. BISHOP FINN

A little more than 100,000 people recently signed a petition demanding that Kansas City-St. Joseph Bishop Robert Finn resign. It was a phony exercise.

The petition was found on the website of change.org, home to mostly left-wing activists. Anyone was able sign it—you didn't have to be Catholic or from Finn's diocese. For example, almost 7,400 signatures were sent to the diocese, and all but approximately 150 were from outside the area. Of the signatories online, activists from foreign countries signed. In short, there is no grassroots rebellion against Bishop Finn.

We know who Bishop Finn's enemies are: the *Kansas City Star* and the *National Catholic Reporter* (both are located in Kansas City, Missouri). They are the real source behind this phony drive: Both have been beating the drum calling for Finn to resign. It is not child sex abuse that angers them, it is where it takes place and under whose purview it is.

There has been an ongoing story in the Orthodox Jewish community of rampant child sexual abuse, intimidation of victims, and a refusal to cooperate with the authorities, yet the *Star* has never covered this issue and the *Reporter* has largely ignored it (both publications carry national stories, not just local ones).

Similarly, at the Spirit Lake Indian Reservation in North Dakota, child rapists abound and kids have been killed, yet neither the *Star* nor the *Reporter* have ever said anything about it. That's because they are too busy focusing on twisted clergy who take crotch-shot pictures of children fully

clothed.

For the past decade, the most important goal of anti-Catholics has been to bring down a bishop. That's what was behind this petition drive.

NEW YORK TIMES' SELECTIVE OUTRAGE

Recently a *New York Times* editorial took a New York City Catholic priest to task for placing a letter written by six former U.S. ambassadors to the Vatican in a church bulletin; the letter offered support for Mitt Romney.

It was not the parishioners, however, who sounded the alarms: it was a coalition of George Soros-funded groups and the *Times*. The Soros-funded groups (they were also behind a petition drive) were Catholics United, Faith in Public Life, and Faithful America. Here are a few examples of real church and state violations that the *Times* showed no interest in addressing:

- In 2000, Al Gore was endorsed by Rev. Floyd Flake in his church
- In 2000, Rick Lazio and Hillary Clinton campaigned in synagogues in the Hamptons
- In 2000, the Black Ministers Council of NJ endorsed John Corzine for governor
- In 2010, Rev. Clinton M. Miller asked his Baptist congregation to vote for Andrew Cuomo for governor (the *Times* reported this though there was no editorial)

In African American neighborhoods, both the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) churches, as well as Baptist ones, have been getting away with political endorsements for years. Indeed, in 1988 Rev. Jesse Jackson took up collections in Chicago churches. No alarms went off.

In April, President Obama called on African Americans to go “to your faith community” and organize “congregation captains” on his behalf. No alarms went off. In June, Michelle Obama told a Nashville AME congregation that there is “no better place” to talk about political issues than in church. No alarms went off.

So why did the alarms go off now? Because a Catholic priest is involved? Also, why can't white liberals call out black ministers for blatant and consistent violations? *Two* expressions of prejudice are operative.