

# DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES FAIL THE RELIGION TEST

In a recent televised debate, Democratic candidates for president addressed the subject of religious liberty. Their positions were troubling.

Julian Castro is so opposed to religious exemptions that he said that if he is elected, his “first order of business on January 20, 2021” would be to roll back religious exemptions that collide with the rights of homosexuals and transgender persons. He did not give one example where he would honor the First Amendment right to the free exercise of religion over the *nowhere mentioned constitutional rights* of homosexuals and transgender persons.

Joe Biden thought he was flashing his “tolerant” Catholic credentials when he boasted that Ireland was the first nation to change its constitution to allow two people of the same sex to marry. He failed to note the triumph of radical secularism in Ireland and the sharp decline of the Catholic Church.

Pete Buttigieg’s enthusiasm for gay rights led him to take another dishonest shot at Vice President Mike Pence (who was governor of Indiana when Buttigieg was mayor of South Bend). He opined that his marriage to another man moved him “closer to God.” He then said, “And I wish the VP could understand that.”

This lie is right out of the gay rights playbook. The goal is to portray anyone who disagrees with gay marriage as a bigot. It is pure demagoguery, and Buttigieg is a master of it.

In 2015, three years after becoming mayor, Buttigieg “came out,” admitting publicly that he is a homosexual. Here is what Pence said at the time. “I hold Mayor Buttigieg in the highest personal regard. I see him as a dedicated public servant and a

patriot.” Moreover, when the two of them met for the first time, Buttigieg said he found Pence to be “affable, even gentle.” In other words, it is not Pence who changed—it is Buttigieg. He is now lying about Pence so he can claim victim status.

Not only has Pence never once questioned Buttigieg’s relationship with God, he has unequivocally said that “If I saw a restaurant owner refuse to serve a gay couple, I wouldn’t eat there anymore.” Not exactly the kind of thing we would expect from a gay basher.

Elizabeth Warren told the audience how she believes in the “preciousness of each and every life.” This is not true. If it were true, then why did she vote against a law that would make it a federal crime for a doctor not to attend to infants born alive due to a botched abortion? Her failure to do so allows infanticide to exist with impunity.

When Cory Booker was asked if churches should lose their tax-exempt status if they don’t support the gay rights agenda, he did not commit himself, though he was clearly not in the religion-friendly camp.

Beto O’Rourke did commit himself: He said that if he is president, there would be “no tax break” for any institution that did not ascribe to the gay rights agenda.

None of the candidates was asked why religious exemptions even exist, or which ones they would keep.

There are some voices in the Democratic Party that freely admit how dangerously secular the Party has grown. Their effort to bring sanity to their Party is commendable. But it is quite clear that they have failed.

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# USA TODAY SLAMS CHURCH FOR DEFENDING ITSELF

Marisa Kwiatkowski is a young reporter for USA TODAY. Her colleague, John Kelly, is a middle-age reporter. For the sake of argument, let's say they are both much older, in their late sixties. Let's also imagine that they have been accused of sexual misconduct by a cub reporter when they were in their early thirties.

Nothing can be done about their alleged misconduct because the accuser came forward only yesterday, and the claim is beyond the statute of limitations. But a new law is being considered that would suspend the statute of limitations for one year, allowing old cases to be adjudicated. The law, however, only applies to those who work in journalism. If someone was molested by a priest or a rabbi, the new law would not apply.

What would Marisa and John have to say about that? Would they protest, arguing that the law was unjust because it singled out journalists? What if they enlisted the support of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) and it agreed to tap an army of lawyers to fight the bill—wouldn't they feel that was justified? And how would they react if their critics called them every name in the book, branding them and the SPJ "criminals" for skirting punishment for their outrageous behavior?

We all know what they would say. Which is why they are such phonies.

The authors have done to the clergy and the Catholic Church what they would find despicable if done to them and their profession.

According to the logic outlined in their 3700-word story, it is callous, if not cruel, for bishops to fight legislation that singles out the Catholic Church under a law that suspends the statute of limitations in cases of sexual abuse. The bishops are supposed to keep their mouths shut, never alerting the faithful to the fact that the law has zero application to those who work outside the Catholic Church.

Obviously, the Catholic Church pushes back against lawmakers who never have the guts to include public school employees—teachers who rape their students—in such legislation. Should it be the only institution in the nation not to defend itself against unjust legislation?

We at the Catholic League have fought hard for decades trying to establish a level playing field, and we apologize to no one for doing so. Guess what happens when we succeed and the public schools are covered? The public school establishment rolls out its big-time lawyers to fight it.

The authors also find it unjust that the Catholic Church complains about adjudicating old cases. Do they have any idea why we have statutes of limitation on the books? Have they ever heard of due process? How can it reasonably be determined if the accused is guilty when the alleged offense took place decades ago?

The reporters think they've hit gold when they "ran 10 of the church's opposition statements—including news releases and letters to government officials and to parishioners—through a language-processing algorithm, searching for commonalities." Guess what their high-tech gimmick found? The Church frequently says that the unjust legislation they are fighting against is "unjust." The sophistry of the reporters is stunning.

The story gets even sillier when we read about some alleged victim who "did not remember being the victim of abuse as a

child...until she was 40.” Really? And why was that? If the reporters were on their game, they would know what a discredited concept the notion of repressed memory is. The scientific literature is near unanimous in concluding that the more heinous the offense, *the less likely it is not to be remembered.*

What makes this USA TODAY story so astonishing is its failure to mention the outstanding report done by USA TODAY in December 2016: it exposed what is going on in the public schools. The title of the report says it all. “Teachers Who Sexually Abuse Students Still Find Classroom Jobs: Despite Decades of Scandals, America’s Schools Still Hide Actions Of Dangerous Educators.”

The story is riveting. “A year-long USA TODAY Network investigation found that education officials put children in harm’s way by covering up evidence of abuse, keeping allegations secret and making it easy for abusive teachers to find jobs elsewhere.” It correctly noted that Congress passed a law in 2015 “requiring states to ban school districts from secretly passing problem teachers to other jurisdictions or face losing federal funds.” And what happened? “But 45 states have not instituted a ban.”

Why didn’t the authors of the USA TODAY story draw on this study? Wouldn’t that have put the issue in context? Or would that have gotten in the way of their narrative?

The Catholic Church has made enormous strides in combating sexual abuse. Indeed, as we have said many times before, there is no institution today, secular or religious, *that has less of a problem with sexual misconduct than the Catholic Church.* But one would never know this by reading this USA TODAY story.

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# AP STUDY OF ACCUSED PRIESTS DESERVES AN “F”

The Associated Press (AP) study of former priests who were credibly accused of sexual misconduct reeks of duplicity, and worse.

The nine-month investigation found nearly 1,700 “priests and other clergy members that the Roman Catholic Church considers credibly accused of child sexual abuse are living under the radar with little or no supervision from religious authorities or law enforcement...”

It would be more accurate to refer to the victims as minors, not children, since most of them were adolescents (e.g., victims of homosexuality, not pedophilia).

The thrust of the story is that once an accused priest is no longer in ministry, in many cases the Church no longer polices him. This is hardly unique: The AP reporters fail to mention a single institution in the nation, secular or religious, that monitors every former employee who has been accused of sexual misconduct. Importantly, this certainly includes the profession of journalism. But that is where the similarities end.

Unlike the public schools, for example, background checks for all new employees in the Catholic Church are routine. Therefore, the likelihood of the Church employing an accused sex offender is rare. This is not true elsewhere, especially in the public schools. And while in the last century, some bishops moved accused priests to another parish—this is no longer the case—this is still the norm in the public schools. How do we know? Because of studies done by the AP and USA TODAY.

In 2007, AP published a series of articles about sexual

offenses in the public schools. It found that between 2001-2005, 2,570 educators had their teaching credentials revoked because of sexual misconduct. It detailed 1,801 cases of abuse: more than 80 percent of the victims were students, and most of the offenders were public school teachers.

What happened to them? "Most of the abuse never gets reported." What about those who did not get their licenses revoked? They are the "mobile molesters," teachers sent to another school or district, a practice so widespread that it's called "passing the trash."

In 2016, USA TODAY published its own series on abuse in the public schools. It found that "passing the trash" was still the norm: abusive teachers were able to move to new teaching jobs, or to other employment working with youth.

In other words, the molesting teachers not only were not monitored once they left the school, they found teaching jobs elsewhere.

Some might ask, "Haven't some accused priests found employment as public school teachers, and in other professions, including jobs working with young people?" They have. Indeed, the AP story on the Church cites examples of this practice.

But why is this the fault of the Catholic Church? Why is this not the fault of the public school establishment, and other professions, for not doing a background check? Responsible parents do a background check on prospective baby sitters. What's wrong with public school officials?

The USA TODAY report also found that most states (45 of them) refused to abide by a 2015 federal law requiring states to ban secret termination agreements, thus allowing accused molesting teachers to find another job without a problem. As important as anything, the study found that the federal government still "does not maintain a database of teachers who have sexually molested children." By contrast, the Catholic Church keeps a

record on accused priests.

The AP public school study touched on this issue as well. Here is an excerpt from the first of three stories.

“Too often problem teachers are allowed to leave quietly. That can mean future abuse for another student and another school district.” It offered a quote from Charol Shakeshaft, one of the nation’s top experts on this subject. “They might deal with it internally,” she said, “suspending the person or having the person move on. So their license is never investigated.”

The story continued. “Laws in several states require that even an allegation of sexual misconduct be reported to the state departments that oversee teacher licenses. But there’s no consistent enforcement, so such laws are easy to ignore.” Shakeshaft attributes this outcome to school officials feeling embarrassed, wanting to avoid “the fallout from going up against a popular teacher.”

The AP story on the Catholic Church really starts to overheat when it says that “Priests and other church employees being listed on sex offender registries at all is a rarity.” Have the reporters lost their mind? These priests have been accused—they have not been found guilty!

How could they make such an irresponsible comment? There are only two plausible answers: their hatred of the Catholic Church is off the charts, or they are just plain stupid. *No accused person is registered as a sex offender unless he has been convicted.* On this score alone, the AP study on the Church deserves an “F.”

Is Charlie Rose a registered sex offender? How about Harvey Weinstein? Hundreds of such examples could be cited.

If the AP reporters focused their sights on the public schools, or on those in the media and Hollywood, they would



have a whole lot more to chew on than zeroing in on the Catholic Church. But that wouldn't win the applause of their colleagues. It's so much more fun to nail an easy target, even if that target looks good by comparison with others.

Shame on the AP for playing politics with such a serious issue.

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## **BILL BARR'S CRITICS LOOK FOOLISH**

Attorney General Bill Barr gave an historically accurate and sociologically sound presentation at Notre Dame Law School on October 11 that has been the source of much chatter by his critics. His topic was the militant secularist assault on religious liberty. If anyone has any doubts about whether this exists, let him read the Catholic League website. The points he made were astute.

Every society is conditioned on a modicum of order, lest it devolve into anarchy. In despotic regimes, order is imposed by the state. In democratic regimes, it relies on self-restraint. What is the source of self-restraint? Nothing harnesses the passions better than the Judeo-Christian ethos. When that is endangered, liberty loses.

Barr is rightfully concerned about the attacks on our religious heritage, leaving us vulnerable to social discord. His critics, who are sociologically illiterate, seem to think that secularism can take the place of our Judeo-Christian tradition. They are wrong. Secularism values individualism and appeals to our base appetites.

What upsets Barr's critics more than anything are his comments on the origins of today's attack on religion. "This is not decay. It is organized destruction."

To *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, this is "the language of witch hunts and pogroms." Catherine Rampell at the *Washington Post* was just as alarmed, saying his remarks are "a tacit endorsement of theocracy." *Mother Jones* reported that his speech "shocked legal experts." Mary Papenfuss at Huffington Post said his address "revealed how deeply the top lawman in the nation is tied to his Catholicism."

Krugman's scary scenario of witch hunts and pogroms makes him sound delusional. Similarly, Rampell's fear that Barr wants a theocracy is crazy talk. Any "legal expert" who is shocked to learn about the sociological role of religion in a free society is badly educated. Barr's Catholicism, naturally, upsets the tolerant ones; they can't get over it.

Barr's critics do not believe there is any organized effort to attack our religious roots. Ironically, two of his critics—American Atheists and Freedom From Religion Foundation—are organized to do just that. This shows how clueless Barr's critics are.

If these savants had it their way, they would censor Barr. "Consider for a moment how inappropriate it is for Barr, of all people, to have given such a speech," writes Krugman. "The Constitution guarantees freedom of religion; the nation's chief enforcement officer has no business denouncing those who exercise that freedom by choosing not to endorse any religion."

The same part of the Constitution cited by Krugman guarantees freedom of speech. Yes, that even allows the Attorney General of the United States to defend religious liberty—just as it allows economists like Krugman to criticize him.

Bill Barr gave a courageous and much-needed statement on the

current state of religious liberty. It sounded like it was taken right out of the Catholic League playbook.

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## **STD CRISIS IS NO MYSTERY**

We have an STD crisis on our hands, one that many elites continue to misunderstand.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia are at an all-time high. Nearly 2.5 million cases were reported in 2018. What makes this so disturbing is the fact that not too long ago these three diseases had been in decline; they have been increasing for the past five years.

Most alarming is the 40 percent increase in congenital syphilis, cases where newborns contract the disease from their mothers. This resulted in the deaths of 94 infants in 2018.

Gonorrhea and chlamydia increased by 5 and 3 percent, respectively, between 2017 and 2018. Since 2014, the former disease increased by 63 percent and the latter by 19 percent.

What's driving the increase? The CDC says it can be explained by a decrease in condom use among young people and among homosexuals (or what they politely call MSM, which stands for "men having sex with men"), increased screening among some groups, and budget cuts to sexual health programs.

In the 1950s, the birth control pill was not available, abortion was illegal, sex education hardly existed, and we spent almost nothing on sexual health programs. According to elite logic in 2019, STD rates should have been through the sky, yet they hardly existed. That's today's problem.

What we didn't have in the 1950s was the fallout of a sexual revolution.

For example, the CDC reports that gay and bisexual men, who are a small minority of the population, accounted for the majority (54 percent) of all syphilis cases in 2018. Earlier this year, it said that primary and secondary syphilis—the most infectious stages of the disease—were mostly attributable to homosexuals; they accounted for almost 90 percent of all cases.

How can this be? Is there anyone—gay or straight—who hasn't heard about the consequences of promiscuity?

The STD crisis is no mystery. But it takes guts to tell the truth.