

BACHMANN'S BELIEFS UNDER SCRUTINY

In a recent lead story that ran on the website of The Atlantic magazine, it was noted that Rep. Michele Bachmann was a longtime member at a church affiliated with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), a church that believes the pope is the Antichrist. The Atlantic's senior editor, Joshua Green, called Bill Donohue for his take on the issue.

Donohue said, "Clearly, [considering the pope the Antichrist] is anti-Catholic. This kind of hatred is reminiscent of Bob Jones. I believe [Bachmann] has in the past condemned anti-Catholicism. But there's no question—all you have to do is read it—that [WELS] clearly has anti-Catholic statements" on its website. Donohue refrained from passing judgment on Bachmann, due to the lack of evidence of bigotry on her part, but stated that she must address the matter promptly.

Donohue went on to say, "We never went after Obama for sitting there for 20 years listening to Rev. 'G**d*** America' Wright. I don't want to give him a pass, but I saw no bigotry on Obama's part. Similarly, I have seen none on Bachmann's part. But it's clear that the [WELS'] teachings are noxious and it's important for her to speak to the issue. Obama had to answer for Wright, McCain had to answer for [the Rev. John] Hagee, and this is something that Bachmann has to answer for."

Unsurprisingly, soon after The Atlantic article was published, Donohue was criticized by the left for not condemning Rep. Bachmann. Indeed, it is telling that it took an article about a Republican presidential candidate's church, for the left to discover anti-Catholicism.

Perhaps the most spectacularly dishonest attack was the one delivered by Ben Adler of The Nation magazine. He was not only

angry with Donohue for not slamming Bachmann, he was upset that he compared her membership in a church affiliated with WELS to Barack Obama's membership in a church run by Rev. Jeremiah Wright. Most reasonable people got the point.

Adler, however, was not reasonable, which is why he accused Donohue of partisanship. Was it also partisan when Donohue criticized Sen. John McCain, during his presidential bid, for his cozy relationship with a minister who had previously made anti-Catholic statements? [Note: Pastor John Hagee subsequently made a 180-degree turn.]

Interestingly, Adler's article appeared in *The Nation*, perhaps the oldest anti-Catholic magazine in the U.S. In the 20th century, it was home to Paul Blanshard, the most notorious anti-Catholic bigot of his day. Today, it is known for bashing the Catholic Church on all matters sexual.

These people haven't suddenly discovered anti-Catholicism—they are angry that attempts to smear Bachmann have failed. There is nothing principled about them.

CHRISTIANITY DIDN'T INSPIRE NORWEGIAN NUT

Following the attacks by the Norwegian madman, Anders Behring Breivik, that left dozens of people dead, there were attempts to brand him as a Christian-inspired terrorist. Every one of these attempts were wholly unpersuasive.

Perhaps the most obnoxious piece on this subject was written by Stephen Prothero in his CNN blog: he actually wrote that "Christians have a responsibility to speak out forcefully

against [Breivik], and to look hard at resources in the Christian tradition that can be used to such murderous ends." It is telling that he did not direct us to repair to the teachings of Jesus, when, of course, we would have no problem directing him to Muhammad's appeals to violence. In response to Prothero's article, Bill Donohue told the media, "If he expects a mea culpa from me, he should brace himself for disappointment."

Similarly inane was the column by Mark Juergensmeyer on the website of Religion Dispatches. "If bin Laden is a Muslim terrorist," he writes, "Breivik and [Timothy] McVeigh are surely Christian ones." Wrong. McVeigh was a self-described agnostic who boasted, "Science is my religion." Breivik said he strongly rejects the teachings of Christianity and held that the religion of his upbringing, Protestantism, was "a joke."

Breivik's affiliation with Christianity was purely cultural: he opposed the ideology of multiculturalism that has overwhelmed Europe. So do the leaders of Britain, France and Germany. The famous Italian journalist, Oriana Fallaci, went to her deathbed fighting the incursions that militant Islam was making in Europe, and she was an atheist.

Susan Brooks Thislethwaite and Sally Quinn both engaged in moral equivalency by associating radical Christianity with radical Islam. They both failed to distinguish between the handful of Christians who murder—none of whom ever cite Jesus—and the legions of Muslims who murder, habitually invoking Muhammad. Must they be reminded what the ringleader of 9/11, Mohamed Atta, told his colleagues on how to proceed: "Seconds before the target, your last words should be there is no God but Allah. Muhammad is his messenger." There is no Christian analogue.

The week following the brutal massacre, we found out that Breivik was "high on drugs" when he struck. What we didn't

find out was what those who want to blame Christianity for his actions were on.

OBAMA PLAYS CATCH-22 WITH RELIGIOUS GROUPS

In August, the Obama administration mandated that all health insurance plans cover contraceptives and sterilization for women, though it made an exception for religious employers. But when looked at closer, it became apparent that the exception was flatulent. To wit: a religious employer was defined, in part, as one that primarily employs, and serves, persons who share its religious tenets.

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo said this means that “our institutions would be free to act in accord with Catholic teaching on life and procreation only if they were to stop hiring and serving non-Catholics.” He was absolutely right: Catholic schools, hospitals and social service agencies have a long and distinguished record of serving everyone, regardless of religious affiliation; most even employ non-Catholics. However, there are matters, like foster care programs, where same-religion requisites make sense.

The situation was even more pernicious than it initially appeared. Consider that three years ago, then presidential candidate Barack Obama said he opposed allowing faith-based programs to hire only their own people. Since becoming president, he has authorized his administration to consider this issue on a case-by-case basis, and just recently many of his allies lobbied him to gut the religious liberty provision in hiring altogether.

In other words, the Obama administration is playing Catch-22 with religious employers. If they are too religious, Catholic social service agencies risk losing federal funds, but if Catholic hospitals are not sufficiently religious, they cannot be exempt from carrying health insurance policies that transgress their religious tenets.

The Obama administration knows exactly what it is doing, and what it is doing is burning religious institutions at both ends. This is a pretty sick game. But it is one where there is plenty of time left on the clock

CATHOLIC CHURCH IS BOOMING

All we ever hear from the wild-eyed critics of the Catholic Church, including the dissidents within, is that the Church had better “get with it” and change its teachings on abortion, homosexuality and women’s ordination. Yet it is precisely those religious institutions that are the most liberal on these issues—the mainline Protestant denominations—that are collapsing. Not so the Catholic Church. Indeed, its numbers are going north while the mainline denominations are going south.

The latest findings by the “Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership” project, a collaborative effort with Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, are illuminating. In the last 40 years, the Catholic population has increased by 75 percent; it has grown by 50 percent since 1990. More important, Catholic attendance at Mass is up 15 percent since 2000. And in the last five years, contributions have increased by 14 percent. It is also important to note that there has been a 40 percent increase in

Latinos in the Church over the past five years.

Shedding more light on the statistics is a study released a few months ago by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion. Its "Landscape Survey" found that of those Catholics who have left the Church, roughly half became unaffiliated while the other half became Protestant. Regarding the latter half, only 23 percent did so because of the Church's teachings on abortion and homosexuality; only 16 percent left because of the way women are treated. Importantly, two-thirds of these Catholics elected to join a Protestant evangelical church.

In other words, disaffected Catholics who left for another religion opted to join a more conservative church. That they did not run down the block in search of a mainline denomination—one that entertains the liberal agenda on issues governing sexuality and women—is telling.

It's time some people took a hard look at the data and made some hard choices. This is great news for the Catholic Church.

TheseStoneWalls.com

This issue is loaded with news about attacks on the Church stemming from the professional victims' lobby. If you want to read about a priest who has persistently maintained his innocence, and is sitting in a New Hampshire prison, check out the Internet site, TheseStoneWalls.com, and read about the plight of Fr. Gordon MacRae. You can decide for yourself whether he was treated fairly.

NEW YORK TIMES FANS DISSENT

A few years ago, Fr. Roy Bourgeois decided to break with the Catholic Church's teachings on ordination and "ordained" a woman in an illicit ceremony. He was given three years to recant, but he refused, and was recently threatened with excommunication.

He has been considered a hero to Church critics, especially the New York Times, which recently ran a positive article about him. Had he been a reporter who decided to break with the Times' editorial position on abortion—putting a positive spin on pro-life leaders, while casting aspersions on abortion-rights advocates—he would not have lasted three weeks.

Other than the Times, not a single newspaper in the U.S. carried a story on Fr. Bourgeois that day. Indeed, in the three months prior, there were only two other stories on the renegade priest, and one of them was a front-page story in the Times a week earlier. It's the way the paper spun the story—fanning dissent—that counted most.

The story referred to Call to Action as "an organization for reform-minded Catholics." It would have been more accurate to say it is an organization of senior citizens, many of whom are ex-priests and nuns, who are so out of touch with the Church that some bishops have excommunicated its members. In 1990, it took out an ad in the Times calling for all the familiar reforms, pledging to garner 100,000 signatures. After 18 months, it wound up with 21,000.

By contrast, the story branded Opus Dei as an "ultra-orthodox group." Looks like the reporter, Dirk Johnson, has been reading too much of Dan Brown lately.

One of Call to Action's leaders, Bob Heineman, wanted to know whether the Church is the hierarchy, or the people. Either way

he loses: the rank-and-file support the hierarchy, not Call to Action.

NEW YORK TIMES' DUMB TAKE ON CATHOLICISM

Recently Bill Keller, executive editor of the New York Times, wrote a book review of *Absolute Monarchs: A History of the Papacy*, by John Julius Norwich. After reading the review in the Times, it is hard to say who is dumber—Keller or Norwich.

To say that Pope Urban VIII imprisoned Galileo and banned all his works is without doubt the voice of a moron: Urban VIII lauded Galileo's work and showered him with gifts and medals. Furthermore, Galileo was never imprisoned; he was put under house arrest in an apartment in a Vatican palace, with a servant.

Similarly, to say that Pope Pius XII was an enabler of fascism is libelous: in fact, no one did more to save Jews and undermine Hitler than him. That is why the Israelis planted 800,000 trees in his honor, one for every Jew he saved.

Keller was right to say that Norwich is "no scholar," and he was doubly right to say that he is "selective about where he lingers." Where he lingers is in the mythical world. Any author who wants to be taken seriously does not offer an entire chapter about some alleged historical figure whom the author reluctantly admits never lived. But that is just what he did by offering up fairy tales about "Pope Joan."

Naturally, Keller said the bishops blamed "the libertine culture" for the "scourge of pedophile priests." But the

“blame Woodstock” explanation originated with the New York Times, not the bishops, and the scourge he mentions is homosexuality, not pedophilia. So he was twice wrong.

It is not surprising that the book ends by begging the Church to accept homosexuality and women priests. That is what these people live for. But since neither Keller nor Norwich is Catholic, why should they care? They care because the Church does not entertain their trendy ideas about sexuality, and it never will.

NEW YORK TIMES IS GAY CRAZY

Recently the New York Times ran a story on the Gay Softball World Series. And it wasn't buried: it was on the front page.

The story was about the purging of heterosexuals and bisexuals from the competition (what ever happened to diversity and inclusion?). That same day there was also a story about gay activists in Rhode Island who are against the religious liberty protections included in a civil union bill. Also meriting attention was the right of a man from Venezuela fighting deportation: he claimed he is married to a New Jersey man and can stay, and with the help of the Obama administration, it looks like he will.

There were stories on gay rights activist Brian Ellner's successful campaign to get same-sex marriage approved in New York; a fundraiser to discourage homosexuals from killing themselves noting the appearance of Johnny Weir, “the flamboyant figure skater” who “arrived in sequined hot pants”; and a White House reception for gays, attended by columnist Dan Savage “who arrived with his husband.” In an article on flashy new names for paint, it mentioned a color called

Genteel Lavender, about which a young actress astutely noted it should be called, "My Gay Best Friend."

In 2000, New York Times reporter Richard Berke told a gay crowd that "on any given day, three-quarters of the people who decide what goes on the front page are 'not-so-closeted homosexuals.'" Interestingly, to this day, the Times has never printed Berke's remark.

AIR FORCE ATTACKED BY RELIGIOUS FOES

The U.S. Air Force recently suspended a class at Vandenberg Air Force Base after complaints that it violates church and state separation. The following is Bill Donohue's letter to Gen. Edward A. Rice, Jr., the Commander of Air Education and Training:

I have a three-fold interest in writing to you about the decision to suspend the "Christian Just War Theory" class at Vandenberg AFB: (a) I am the president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization (b) I am a former college professor (c) I am a veteran of the U.S. Air Force.

The decision to suspend the course is not only wrongheaded, it represents capitulation to political pressure emanating from the foes of religious liberty. For several years, I have stood by the United States Air Force Academy leadership in their attempt to stave off assaults by Mikey Weinstein's Military Religious Freedom Foundation, and others. The goal of these pressure groups is to censor the public expression of religion on the campuses of military academies, and at military installations, in general. They are doing so under the guise

of constitutional concerns.

As one who has written several books on this subject, I can testify that there is absolutely nothing in the Constitution of the United States that disqualifies a presentation of St. Augustine's "just war theory," and related biblical references. In fact, the First Amendment protects freedom of speech, as well as religious liberty. "Just war theory" is taught at state institutions all across the nation—explicitly citing Augustine's contribution—and never has it been an issue. Moreover, biblical passages are often cited when referencing the work of Rev. Martin Luther King. Should we similarly censor them?

I have read the materials used in the class, and can assure you that no one—save an anti-religious zealot—would find fault with them. I therefore urge you to stand fast against these bullies and do what is academically right and constitutionally protected: reinstate the class.

“THE LEDGE” SELLS ATHEISM

Over the summer, the movie “The Ledge” opened in Los Angeles and New York. People of faith are used to being trashed by Hollywood, but this film was different: it was an open promotion of atheism.

The characters in the movie were utterly predictable. Gavin's loss of faith deepened after his wife blamed him when their daughter was killed in an accident. Because he believes in nothing, he is the good guy. Gavin has an affair with an evangelical's wife—you guessed it, the evangelical is a close-minded homophobe—leaving the poor gal (played by Liv Tyler) in a mess. You see, she was once a prostitute before her husband

(himself a former alcoholic and drug abuser) introduced her to God. In any event, after Mr. Intolerant, the evangelical, discovers the affair, he tells Gavin to jump from a ledge or he'll kill both of them, as well as himself.

Matthew Chapman is the writer and director. "God-fearing straight men have had a monopoly for a very long time," he says, "and many peculiar decisions have been made." Among the most peculiar, historically speaking, is something Chapman doesn't want to admit: it was the Judeo-Christian ethos of America that accounts for the unprecedented levels of justice and freedom enjoyed by non-believers.

Chapman is an atheist and the great-great grandson of Charles Darwin. Darwin, it should be noted, was a self-described agnostic. He once said to a dogmatic atheist, Edward Aveling, "Why should you be so aggressive? Is anything gained by trying to force these new ideas upon the mass of mankind?" Too bad Chapman didn't learn that lesson