

# CARDINAL GEORGE STANDS ON PRINCIPLE

Everyone knows that the Catholic Church has a long and proud history of immigrant outreach. Everyone knows that the Catholic Church, like virtually every religion in the history of the world, believes marriage should be confined to one man and one woman. It should come as no surprise, then, that Catholics who financially support pro-immigrant organizations expect that their contribution will not fund entities that reject Church teachings on marriage.

The Chicago Archbishop, Francis Cardinal George, made a principled decision not to funnel funds, via the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), to the Illinois Coalition of Immigrant and Refugee Rights, a pro-gay marriage institution. This has led to an uproar among some in Chicago. Their angst is contrived.

As Cardinal George said in his open letter of July 29, organizations that apply for CCHD funding do so knowing that they are expected to respect Church teachings. No one forces them to apply; they are free to secure funds elsewhere. But when they violate their agreement, and are called out for doing so, they should not pretend to be victims.

Mark Brown, a columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, wrote that all along he has said that "it's a mistake for the church to use the grants to punish organizations that it knows to be doing good work in the community..." So when an organization applies for funding, and is then denied because it violated an agreement that it voluntarily entered into, it is being punished for doing so. Amazing logic. Hope any handyman who enters into an agreement with Brown knows about his moral compass.

If Cardinal George denied funding to a pro-immigrant organization that was aligned with racist or anti-Semitic causes, he would be heralded as a champion of human rights. But because the issue is gay marriage, he is condemned. The politics are so transparent that it's making a joke of those promoting it.

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## **USA TODAY FLAGS LETTERMAN'S BIGOTRY**

During the week Pope Francis visited Brazil for World Youth Day, late night comedians lined up to take cheap shots. On its website, *USA Today* took a poll asking respondents to choose which video they liked best: the one where David Letterman compared all priests to molesters, or the one where Jay Leno said Pope Francis could be mistaken for Lady Gaga.

While Leno's jab was inoffensive, Letterman's July 23 monologue was vile. His "altar boy" quip—World Youth Day is called by the Vatican "salute to altar boys"—is a vicious hit on 40,000 innocent priests.

*USA Today* took Letterman's offensive remarks to a new level. It not only flagged his bigotry, it celebrated it. Predictably, many more respondents preferred Letterman's obscene statement to Leno's throw-away line.

*USA Today* is flustered over racial profiling, but considers religious profiling acceptable, at least when it comes to priests. And they consider themselves open-minded and fair.

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# JESELNIK IS OFFENSIVE

On the August 6 episode of the Comedy Central show, “The Jeselnik Offensive,” the excerpt from the “Worst Best Thing of the Week” segment featured Anthony Jeselnik, Dave Attell and Joan Rivers:

Jeselnik: “Finally, the Vatican is giving gay priests the same respect they show pedophiles.”

Rivers: “The pope, surprise, is the gayest. The man wears a dress, lives with all guys, you know.”

Attell: “And the cool thing about it is I’m a Jew and I could really care less about the whole thing. I mean, you know, an Easter egg hunt is an Easter egg. If it ends in an ass, it doesn’t matter to me. I don’t care.”

Rivers: “He’s bringing the church into the 21st century, and let’s be happy about that. I mean, ass-less altar boy costumes....We all have to kiss the pope’s ring. I love it now because he likes gays, and he says, fine now—lower, lower, lower, and, uh, don’t forget the balls.”

In June, Kevin Hermanson contacted the Catholic League’s office several times trying to get Bill Donohue to go on this show. Donohue had never heard of Jeselnik, so he asked his staff to check Jeselnik out. They quickly discovered that he was a jerk. So Donohue said no.

By the way, when Hermanson learned that the Catholic League’s office was in New York, he said it wouldn’t have been possible to do the show anyway: he said they didn’t have a budget to fly Donohue out.

It’s a wonder they have a budget to pay these fools whatever it is they are paying them.

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# EMMY CRAZE OVER “ASYLUM”

On July 18, the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences made its announcement of the 65th Primetime Emmy Awards nominations. The show receiving the most nominations was without doubt the most anti-Catholic of the lot.

Over the past few years, few TV programs have been as thoroughly anti-Catholic as FX Channel's "American Horror Story: Asylum." This show, which leads the pack with 17 Emmy nominations, depicted a Catholic home for the criminally insane run by sadistic and libidinous nuns. The plot is sinister as well. The show's characters include a nymphomaniac, a lesbian, a degenerate bully, a serial killer, and a doctor who enjoys torturing patients. What a bunch of characters!

When the Catholic League tried to put an advertisement critical of the series in *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety* magazines, the advertisement was rejected outright.

This should not have come as any kind of surprise. Hollywood's hatred of Catholicism is almost pathological. Indeed, it is so pronounced that it extends even to the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. This year's Emmy nominations are a clear example of the bias that reigns in the media, in television as well as on film.

What other group receives such treatment? Once again, television has sunk lower than we ever thought possible. Talk about crazy!

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## MAHER'S PATHOLOGY CONTINUES

In an August 2 monologue, Bill Maher made much of the pope's remarks about not judging homosexuals for who they are, but none of his quips were below the belt. However, he couldn't stop there.

Maher noted he would be away for the next five weeks, and offered his predictions for what the headlines will be while away. On the screen was a mock-up of the Fox News webpage, the headline of which read, "Pope Francis Moves to Massachusetts, Marries Longtime Companion." Below the headline was a picture of the pope and an elderly man.

At the time, Ramadan was just ending. Maher had many chances to stick it to Muslims, but he demurred. His reticence was not based on ethics—he has none—it was based on fear. On the other hand, his hatred of Catholicism, which is pathological, continues to be expressed. That's because he has no fear of being retaliated against.

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## GAYS BULLY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

When an employee signs a contract with his employer, he agrees to abide by certain house rules. Subsequently, the employee willfully violates the contract. After he is fired, he threatens to sue. Meanwhile, an online petition calling for his reinstatement emerges. Sounds pretty basic: the employer had every right to enforce the contract, and efforts by outsiders to bully the employer into acquiescence are

unethical. But wait—this case involves homosexuality; to many this constitutes a game-changer. Different issues are at stake now.

A homosexual teacher at St. Lucy's Priory High School outside Los Angeles was wed to another man on July 1. The school found out about it, and the teacher was terminated. The school said that what its teachers do in private is not its business. However, "public displays of behavior that are directly contrary to church teachings are inconsistent with these values." They didn't make up these rules on the fly. "These values are incorporated into the contractual obligations of each of our instructors and other employees."

There are those who, like Republican gay activist David Lampo, consider it absurd to maintain that gay marriage threatens religious liberty. It would be instructive to know what in the world they think is going on in this case. The truth is that it has been known for years that gay rights and religious rights are on a collision course. Importantly, only one of those rights is enshrined in the First Amendment. Hint: it isn't the one that deals with sex.

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# CATHOLICISM'S RISE, FALL, AND UNCERTAIN FUTURE

**KENNETH D. WHITEHEAD**

***Russell Shaw, American Church: The Remarkable Rise, Meteoric Fall, and Uncertain Future of Catholicism in America (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2013).***

This new book of Russell Shaw's on the "American Church" is

the best available current account that you are likely to find describing what the Catholic Church in America has become today and where she stands. It is readable, fast-paced, and accurately sourced. The author writes from a solidly orthodox standpoint; he believes the faith and loves the Church; and he is also quite knowledgeable about his chosen subject, occasionally even adding an insider's revelation (he was in charge of media relations for the American Catholic bishops for 18 years). Although he is quite critical of some recent trends in the Catholic Church in America today, as the title of his book indicates, he is most distinctly not one of those carping liberal critics who thinks that the Church has got to "change" in order "to keep up with the times."

Quite the contrary. He sees and views with no little alarm some of the results of the "Americanization" of Catholicism which has brought with it widespread attitudes and practices by some American Catholics that are simply incompatible with traditional and authentic Catholic belief and practice. In becoming assimilated to American life and society—in striving to prove that "good Catholics" could indeed be "good Americans"—many American Catholics have ended up buying into some American practices and attitudes that diverge, sometimes sharply, from what the Church continues to teach and enjoin.

From Catholic politicians who say they are "personally opposed" to abortion, but who nevertheless publicly promote it, to the Catholic married couples who employ forbidden birth control methods, these Catholics are actually demonstrating that Americanization has not resulted in maintaining their Catholic faith and practice. While there was a time when it could be argued that American democracy was for the most part quite compatible with true Catholicism, today's galloping decadence and moral decline—Shaw calls it "toxic"—render increasingly difficult, if not impossible, the notion that today's brand of "Americanism" can be considered compatible with authentic Catholicism.

But the author's concern for the Church in America is not confined to the contemporary scene. He goes back to the beginnings of the Church in this country and shows how the successive waves of Catholic immigrants to these shores from Ireland, Germany, and later from Italy and Eastern Europe, brought about the "remarkable rise" of Catholicism in what was originally almost entirely a Protestant America. This rise was remarkable, and yet the bishops and the religious orders of the day largely succeeded in keeping the large number of Catholics who arrived in this country as loyal sons and daughters of the Church. At the same time, this same leadership saw the absence of any state religion in the United States as an opportunity for the advancement of Catholicism. Such figures as Father Isaac Hecker, founder of the Paulist Fathers, actually thought America was ripe for conversion to Catholicism.

This hope and estimate proved to be overly optimistic (as the author shows, the "public intellectual" and convert, Orestes Brownson, realized this at the time). In chronicling the establishment of a flourishing Catholicism in America, however, Shaw focuses on the career of James Cardinal Gibbons. The archbishop of Baltimore from 1877 until his death in 1921, Gibbons was the principal leader of the American bishops who successfully advocated assimilation to the American way. Catholics need to know this history if they are to understand the Church today, and Shaw has provided a convenient and accurate summary of its main features.

A major theme of Shaw's book, in fact, deals with what he calls the "Gibbons Legacy." Indeed, references to this phrase by both the author and by Philadelphia Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., in the latter's introduction, suggest that it was the original title of the book. However that may be, Shaw's treatment of Cardinal Gibbons, and of episcopal colleagues of his such as the archbishop of St. Paul, John Ireland, results in a ready and understandable explanation of



how the Church in America developed.

Throughout his narrative, the author is also conscious of how the Church in America is related to the universal Church, and he provides a brief but clear account of such little understood issues as the so-called "Americanist heresy." Noting how Pope Leo XIII in his *Testem Benevolentiae* of 1899 judged that what the pope styled "Americanism" was unacceptable from a true Catholic standpoint, Shaw shows how the seeds of today's liberal Catholicism and dissent from Catholic teaching were already present in the original drive for Americanization and assimilation to American culture. That this American culture would eventually become transformed into the secularist, materialist, and relativist system which we see today—and which plainly diverges from anything acceptable to Catholic orthodoxy—was something that Leo XIII feared all along, but which the American bishops of the Gibbons type apparently did not see or anticipate. Meanwhile, however, American Catholics allowed to go by the board, and even sometimes dismantled, many of the Church structures and practices that had traditionally buttressed the faith and practice of Catholics.

In illustrating what in his title he calls the "meteoric fall" of the Church in America, Shaw correctly cites the spectacular drops in Mass attendance and other sacramental participation. Similarly, he takes note of the mass defections of priests and religious that followed Vatican Council II, and the large numbers of the laity that have strayed. No less than 22 million Catholics have left the Church—one in three of those who were once Catholic. Ex-Catholics constitute the second largest "denomination" in America after the Catholic community itself!

Among other polls, Shaw instances the 2011 survey which found that even among Catholics who describe themselves as "highly committed" to the Church, some 49 percent say it is possible to be a "good Catholic" while deliberately missing Mass on

Sundays; 60 percent disagree with the Church's teaching forbidding birth control; 46 percent dissent from the teaching against divorce and remarriage; and even 31 percent disagree with the Church's firm teaching against abortion. The author cites yet other polls in the same vein, and this, along with not a little anecdotal evidence that he mentions in passing, perhaps understandably, leads to the conclusion that the future of the Church in America is "uncertain."

And certainly, there is the added fact that a majority of American Catholics voted for the radically pro-abortion Barack Obama, while America's premier Catholic institution of higher education, the University of Notre Dame, actually awarded this same pro-abortion president an honorary degree, thereby going directly against the announced position of the American bishops that Catholic institutions should not honor those who speak and act against Catholic teaching.

Following the massive public dissent from Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* by Catholic theologians—and the equally massive shift in the behavior of the Catholic laity in the 1960s and 1970s—it seemed that "some form of 'liberal' or 'progressive' Catholicism, freed from (or, more neutrally, disengaged from) the philosophical and theological underpinnings of the past, would emerge as the 'serious' Catholicism of the future." This did seem to be the case to many observers, and not a few of them apparently continue to believe pretty much the same thing today. On the basis of the facts, arguments, and statistics adduced by Shaw, then, it is not easy to dismiss out of hand his conclusion that the future of the Catholic Church in America is indeed "uncertain."

Students of Catholic history, however, aware of the Catholic Church's well-known and often-demonstrated ability to revive after periods of decline, and like the phoenix bird to rise again out of the ashes, have in very recent years been able to point to many signs of revival. The pontificates of both Blessed John Paul II and Benedict XVI have been particularly

positive in helping to inspire such a revival. For example, the issuance of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in the early 1990s, along with the revision of the Roman Missal later in the same decade, as well as the new English liturgical translations, have been particularly influential in helping restore both authenticity and greater stability to contemporary Catholic faith and practice in the United States. In other words, there is hope. The pontificate of Pope Francis seems to be shaping up in the same way. The Catholic Church is, after all, still the true Church of Christ, who promised to be with her “always”(Mt 28:20).

Shaw mentions some of the signs of this revival. They include: new Catholic schools and colleges that are truly Catholic; reversion to a more authentic Catholic character by some of the older institutions that had gone astray; new media ventures such as EWTN and Catholic radio; new periodicals and publishers, as well as the new Catholic Internet; new orders, institutes, and organizations promoting Catholic spirituality, causes such as the pro-life and pro-family movements; the appearance of a new generation of gung-ho “John Paul II priests”; and, above all, bishops standing up to the current secularist juggernaut in areas such as healthcare, marriage, and the like. The response of the Catholic people generally to the bishops’ call for resistance to the HHS mandate is particularly noteworthy.

There are signs, then, that the Catholic Church in America does have a future. This future no doubt remains “uncertain,” as Shaw contends. But there are also many grounds for hope. Shaw’s book, *American Church*, is thus eminently worth reading: it allows us to see where we have been and where we are. Where we are going is still in God’s hands—and in ours!

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