

Patrick H Gormley

**FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION,
NEW YORK TIMES AD 2012:**

Dear ‘Liberal’ Catholic:

It’s time to quit the Roman Catholic Church.

It’s your moment of truth. Will it be reproductive freedom, or back to the Dark Ages? Do you choose women and their rights, or Bishops and their wrongs? Whose side are you on, anyway?

It is time to make known your dissent from the Catholic Church, in light of the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops’ ruthless campaign endangering the right to contraception. If you’re part of the Catholic Church, you’re part of the problem.

Why are you propping up the pillars of a tyrannical and autocratic, woman-hating, sex-perverting, antediluvian Old Boys Club? Why are you aiding and abetting a church that has repeatedly and publicly announced a crusade to ban contraception, abortion and sterilization, and to deny the right of all women everywhere, Catholic or not, to decide whether and when to become mothers? When it comes to reproductive freedom, the Roman Catholic Church is Public Enemy Number One. Think of the acute misery, poverty, needless suffering, unwanted pregnancies, social evils and deaths that can be laid directly at the door of the Church’s antiquated doctrine that birth control is a sin and must be outlawed.

A backer of the Roman Catholic presidential candidate says that if women want to avoid pregnancy we should put an aspirin between our knees? Catholic politicians are urging that the right to contraception should be left up to states? Nearly 50 years after the Supreme Court upheld contraception as a privacy right, we’re going to have to defend this basic freedom all over again?

You’re better than your church. So why? Why continue to attend Mass? Tithe? Why dutifully sacrifice to send your children to parochial schools so they can be brainwashed into the next generation of myrmidons (and, potentially, become the next Church victims)? For that matter, why have you put up with an institution that won’t put up with women priests, that excludes half of humanity?

No self-respecting feminist, civil libertarian or progressive should cling to the Catholic faith. As a Cafeteria Catholic, you chuck out the stale doctrine and mouldy decrees of your religion, but keep patronizing the establishment that menaces public health by serving rotten offerings. Your continuing Catholic membership, as a “liberal,” casts a veneer of respectability upon an irrational sect determined to blow out the Enlightenment and threaten liberty for women worldwide. You are an enabler. And it’s got to stop.

If you imagine you can change the church from within — get it to lighten up on birth control, gay rights, marriage equality, embryonic stem-cell research — you are deluding yourself. If you remain a “good Catholic,” you are doing “bad” to women’s rights. You’re kidding yourself if you think the Church is ever going to add a Doctrine of Immaculate ContraCeption.

It is disgraceful that U.S. health care reform is being held hostage to the Catholic Church’s bizarre opposition to medically prescribed contraception. No politician should jeopardize electability for failure to genuflect before the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. (Question to ask your Bishop: Does he hold up an umbrella against the rain? Isn’t that just as “unnatural” as using a condom or diaphragm?)

Your Church hysterically claims that secular medical policy is “an assault against religious liberty.” You are savvy enough to realize that the real assault is by the Church against women’s rights and health care. As Nation columnist Katha Pollitt asks: Is it an offense against Jehovah Witnesses that health care coverage will include blood transfusions? The Amish, as Pollitt points out, don’t label cars “an assault on religious liberty” and try to force everyone to drive buggies. The louder the Church cries “offense against religious liberty” the harder it works to take away women’s liberty.

Obama has compromised, but the Church never budes, instead launching a vengeful modern-day Inquisition. Look at its continuing directives to parish priests to use their pulpits every Sunday to lobby you against Obama’s policy, the Church’s announcement of a major anti-contraception media campaign — using your tithes, contributions and donations — to defeat Obama’s laudable health care policy. The Church has introduced into Congress the “Respect for Rights of Conscience Act,” a bill to place the conscienceless Catholic Church’s “rights of conscience” above the rights of conscience of 53 percent of

Americans. That the Church has “conscience rights” to deny women their rights is a kissing cousin to the claim that “corporations are people.” The Church that hasn’t persuaded you to oppose contraception now wants to use the force of secular law to deny contraceptive rights to non-Catholics.

But is there any point in going on? After all, your misplaced loyalty has lasted through two decades of public sex scandals involving preying priests, children you may have known as victims, and church complicity, collusion and coverup going all the way to the top. Are you like the battered woman who, after being beaten down every Sunday, feels she has no place else to go?

But we have a more welcoming home to offer, free of incense-fogged ritual, free of what freethinker Bertrand Russell called “ideas uttered long ago by ignorant men,” free of blind obedience to an illusory religious authority. Join those of us who put humanity above dogma.

As a member of the “flock” of an avowedly antidemocratic club, isn’t it time you vote with your feet? Please, exit en Mass.

Very truly,
Annie Laurie Gaylor
Co-President
Freedom From Religion Foundation

A RESPONSE BY CHARLES LEWIS

The American culture wars are never far from the surface but on Friday they moved to a new level with the publication of a full-page advertisement in the New York Times that blames the Catholic Church for most of the world’s ills.

It is titled: “It’s Time To Consider Quitting the Catholic Church.” The ad features a cartoon of an insane bishop, screaming at the top of his lungs over the issue of birth control pills. To the right is a disgusted looking woman with her arms crossed saying, “It’s hard to swallow.”

The tag line at the bottom of the page says: “Please, Exit En Mass.”

The ad was taken out by the Freedom From Religion Foundation, an American atheist group, which, according to their site, is a home for freethinkers, atheists, agnostics and other skeptics.”

It is a direct response to the reaction of mainly Catholic and orthodox Protestants to the Obama contraception mandate that will force religious universities and hospitals to provide free birth control pills, morning after pills and sterilization services even if it goes the tenets of the faith.

Particularly vocal on the issue has been Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the Archbishop of New York and head of the powerful United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. It is also the American Catholic Church that has the preponderance of universities and hospitals in the United States.

They have protested loudly and are in the midst of trying to get the Congress to stop what they call an assault on their religious liberty.

At the moment there are at least seven states attorneys general that have taken the federal government to court over the issue and the Becket Fund For Religious Liberty is representing both Catholic and evangelical schools that are opposed to the mandate.

The group that placed the ad may have a fight with the Church over mandatory contraception service for its employees but it goes much further:

* The ad asks, among other things, why “liberal” and “nominal” Catholics are “aiding and abetting a church that has repeatedly engaged in a crusade to ban contraception?

Really? The Church and allied Protestant groups are asking that religious institutions not be forced to provide services that go against their faith. They are not calling for a nationwide ban on contraception.

* It accuses the Church of creating acute misery, poverty, needless suffering, unwanted pregnancies, overpopulation, social evils and deaths.

Really? The Catholic Church in the U.S. feeds for free half its hungry citizens. Go into most major cities and North America and there will be Catholic outreach for the sick and the homeless. In Africa, the Church has provided medicine, hospitals, schools and compassion. I could be wrong but I doubt if the Freedom from Religion Foundation has set up a hospital in Africa.

* It then adds that the “church hysterically claims that secular medical policy is on religious liberty.”

If the writers of this ad read their own Constitution they would find out it is an assault on religious freedom. Even Barack Obama has promised to look at a way to let religious institutions off the hook — though many doubt his sincerity.

* It then goes on to say, “Why put up with an institution that discriminates against half of humanity?”

They are referring to the roughly 600 million women who make up about half the Church. But women in the Church are there because they want to be and they serve as missionaries, nurses, doctors, theologians and teachers — among other roles.

Bill Donohue, head of the U.S. Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, has often been known to use his own hyperbole. But in this case, Mr. Donohue is dead right:

“Never has there been a more vicious anti-Catholic advertisement in a prominent American newspaper than the one in today’s New York Times by Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF). The demonization of Catholicism is palpable.”

Just imagine if this ad appeared about any other identifiable group. We would never hear the end of it. But Catholics, it seems, are fair game.

National Post

MY COMMENT: Lewis claims the ad is wrong to claim that to be part of the Catholic Church is abetting it in attempts to legally ban contraceptive rights. He says the Church merely asks that it not be forced to do things against its beliefs. But if the Catholic really believes contraception is immoral and evil, then clearly they must hope one day to get it banned. The Church does not claim to be a body of opinion or belief. It claims that its teaching IS THE TRUTH - PERIOD! It follows Jesus in his promise to give knowledge of the truth not beliefs and opinions about what truth is. Pity the ad didn't say any of that. This omission weakened its argument.

Sceptics and unbelievers and non-Catholics regard the Church as a community united by opinions and they forget that is not how the Church sees itself. If it does it will be just another entity no more important than a political party.

As for opposing reproductive rights, the Church has to do more than just tell people not to avail of them. A ban has to be at the back of their minds at least. The papacy is very clear that contraception should be made illegal.

It is plain stupid of Catholics to say that contraception or homosexuality are objectively wrong according to divine law but that Catholic politicians have the right to allow them. It contradicts their view that all authority comes from God and His rule that ultimately matters not man's. The secularism of many Catholics is based on error and thus it is weak. What will they do if they awaken from their drowsiness? What will they do when they see through it?

Lewis argues that the ad is wrong to accuse the Church of creating acute misery, poverty, needless suffering, unwanted pregnancies, overpopulation, social evils and deaths. He points out that the Church feeds people and makes hospitals. This really amounts to saying that the Church should mislead gullible women by telling them birth control is a sin as long as it feeds the unwanted kids that will result. A Church that harms people so that it can then do them good is hardly a good thing! Plus many people go through a charade of Church membership so that they can do good for others.

The believers say that God must take supreme importance in the world and in your life. Even when they support secularism, they teach that it is only acceptable in the sense that God gave the state a separate job to do from the Church. So even their secularism is religious at least in intention. It is saying, "We believers support the separation of Church and state on religious grounds and because God asks for it. If our religion tells us different or if God tells us different we will oppose this separation. We only accept because we think God wants us to. If we are wrong we will change our minds." Their secularism only looks like secularism - it is not secularism. Their secularism contradicts and therefore opposes true secularism. Secularism is a human right. It is fair and neutral on religious questions.

Nobody should even be nominally in a religion that teaches seriously evil doctrine.

