



Statists Want to Force Priests to Reveal Confessions

First there were efforts to compel Catholic hospitals to perform abortions. Now statists in some nations want to force priests to violate the confidentiality of confession for, ostensibly, the purpose of uncovering sexual abuse. Adam Shaw at American Thinker provides some background and then explains the recent proposals, writing:



[O]ne of the most important aspects of confession is what is known as the seal of confession. The seal means that the priest who hears confessions is bound by church law on pain of both mortal sin and *latae sententiae* excommunication (a type of excommunication that can be removed only by the Holy See) not to reveal by word or action any of your confession. This basically means that any priest revealing any part of any confession is essentially committing spiritual hara-kari [sic].

...The seal of confession is something that has been attacked in many ways for centuries, from monarchs claiming it to be a cover for treason to communists claiming it can be a cover for spies to the modern-day trend of trying to blame it for the spread of child abuse within the Church. In Australia, parts of mainland Europe and most recently in Ireland, there have been strong moves to pass laws that would force priests to reveal confessions they may have heard from accused sex abusers.

While a sincere person certainly could believe that some secrets are so dark that light must be shone upon them, it's hard to escape the conclusion that the proposed laws are motivated by anti-Christian bias. After all, therapists and attorneys also maintain confidentiality — even after hearing the confession of crimes — in their cases with their clients. So why is the priest-penitent relationship the only one targeted?

Of course, many will now cite the Catholic Church sex-abuse scandals of recent years as the reason. Yet this is misguided. First, it is only the promise of confidentiality that inspires transgressors to reveal their sins to begin with; eliminate that promise and they will be scared away. In turn, this eliminates the priest's opportunity to steer such people away from their sins and toward moral health — and, perhaps, accountability. Second, as Shaw explains:

George Weigel's excellent study[i] of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church showed that priests and religious who were abusing children had almost always ceased entirely the practicing of their faith, and usually had for many years before engaging in such horrific crimes. Additionally, most abusers believe that they are doing nothing wrong, and would therefore not see it as something that needed confessing.



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on August 29, 2011

This is, of course, just common sense. Would a person really violate Catholic teaching by committing heinous sex crimes but yet feel a compulsion to abide by the teaching prescribing confession? It's like thinking that someone could be willing to rob a bank but unwilling to violate gun laws as is necessary to obtain the tools for the crime.

Thus, because of sex abusers' de facto irreligiosity it seems that, if they revealed their crimes anywhere, it would more likely be on a therapist's couch than in a confessional. Yet, again, the former isn't the focus of the statist.

It's ironic that those who claim to believe strongly in a wall of separation between church and state would demand the destruction of that wall when it prevents their peering into the Church's domain. More ironic still is that these statist have turned the only reasonable conception of the separation principle — that promulgated by Thomas Jefferson — on its head. As to this, the idea was not to keep religion out of government, but government out of religion. Yet statist today increasingly demand just the opposite.

Moreover, think of the implications of robbing priests of confidentiality while allowing therapists to retain it. Since a person generally won't open up to someone who can't offer confidentiality, some individuals who might otherwise have sought help from priests will instead seek out a psychologist. And what would be the difference? Well, while a person might receive God-centered, traditionalist counsel from a priest, he is almost guaranteed to get quite the opposite from most therapists, as they are a decidedly secular bunch. And virtue, morality, and religion, which Patrick Henry called the "pillars of all government and of social life," are the casualties.

Of course, though, to a psychological organization that wants to increase its members' market share, earning power, and influence or to a social engineer who aims to further destroy religion, it is quite a welcomed development.



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