

A Not-Perfect Defense

Steve Cuno

Gadzooks. A shocking revelation just took down another politician. Nearby and on the same day, another cleric was busted, too. I shall withhold their names, not for legal reasons or discretion's sake but because I'm writing weeks before they will have been caught and therefore don't know who they will turn out to be. Still, I am confident that my open-

in the works, but the People have already filed a civil action with the United States Third District Court of Public Opinion. At issue is Section C, Rule 14 of the Anti-Asshat Act of 1913, which concerns "... any person of influence caught gleefully pursuing in secret that which he or she rabidly condemns in public."

Our politician, a man who built his career leading the Torch and Pitchfork Brigade against nonwhites, non-Christians, the LGBTQ, fornicators, adulterers, prostitutes, climate science, and intellectuals was recently discovered having paid sex with a male, brown-skinned PhD-candidate Wiccan in the back of a Prius. Promptly convening a press conference, he announced his long-pondered, purely coincidental decision to resign from public service and devote more time to family matters. Choking back sobs, he asked for the public's and his family's forgiveness. It was downright heart-rending, the way he voluntarily confessed and showed contrition and all, which coincided with but was in no way connected to his being busted.

As for our cleric, delete the Prius, replace the "paid" in "paid sex" with "coerced," and replace the Wiccan with a permanently emotionally scarred congregant, likely a minor. The religious organization's higher-ups declined to hold a press conference but be assured they dealt with the matter

swiftly and appropriately per church policy, which calls for victim-blaming, attacking the plaintiff's credibility, maneuvering to avoid legal liability, and calling for fasting and prayers to ensure that such a thing never, ever happens again. Meanwhile, they quietly sent off the cleric to a fresh start with a new, unsuspecting flock, which is only fair.

Then, just when you thought the remorse-fest couldn't wax any more moving, the politician made the ultimate admission, which, impossible though it seemed, cranked up the emotion yet another notch. Right there, before family, colleagues, supporters, and TV cameras, he said, out loud no less, "I'm not perfect." And in a reluctantly released official statement, the religious organization likewise conceded, "It's important to remember that, although these men are called of God, they are not perfect."

I'll wait while you wring out your hanky.

I cannot fathom, and can only admire, the depth of humility that publicly admitting to not-perfecthood requires. The politician could have dodged the issue with "I'm a hypocrite and a liar" and the cleric with "I'm turning myself in to face serial rape charges," but instead they bravely faced the fact that public outrage had nothing to do with either of those things. I mean, come on. We hardly ever see anyone upset over hypocritical politicians or pred-

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ing line will prove accurate at press time, thanks to a recent scientific study showing that a misbehaving politician and a lascivious cleric are outed every time McDonald's sells a burger.

I feel equally confident in describing how events unfolded from there. Criminal charges may or may not be

ator priests, but I wish I had a dollar for every mob that took to the streets holding up signs that say, "Not-perfect people are scum."

But, men of character that they are, our contrite politician and our repentant cleric chose not to take the easy way out. They chose to own their not-perfecthood come what may.

I'm sure I speak for all FREE INQUIRY readers when I say that introducing not-perfecthood into the equation changes everything. It becomes suddenly and abundantly clear that the real victims here are the politician and the cleric. The people they allegedly—*allegedly*—harmed aren't the ones who lost a career, suffered the indignity of a transfer, and suffered humiliation seeing the media parade one's not-perfecthood before the world. The trivial woes of the allegedly harmed will soon blow over, but wherever our politician and cleric may wander, each will


be forever doomed to hear the whisper of wagging tongues: *There goes that not-perfect guy.*

At this difficult time, members of the Torch and Pitchfork Brigade also

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deserve our compassion and support. Imagine the stress upon their denial skills due to ongoing exposures of their leaders. Imagine having to carry

on the important work of condemning the wicked while knowing that at any moment their own secrets could be the subject of the next viral tweet.

It's time to stop obsessing on our penitent heroes' actions and the alleged consequences thereof. We need to dismount our high horses and afford the poor guys the leeway that not-perfectness demands. They have all but sewn a scarlet NOT PERFECT across their respective bodices. No reasonable person would expect more. 

Steve Cuno is the as-told-to author of Joanne Hanks's memoir, *It's Not About the Sex My Ass: Confessions of an Ex-Mormon, Ex-Polygamist, Ex-Wife*. A recovering marketing writer, Cuno lives and writes in Utah. Why they let him stay is beyond him.