

*Bad Faith Makes Bad Politics*  
*The Culture of Life Foundation on Capitol Hill*

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A special report from  
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In the long line of strange bedfellows, an unusual marriage of convenience has recently been consummated between a small, elite antichoice organization in Washington, DC, the Culture of Life Foundation & Institute, and the New York-based Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, a UN lobbying group headed by Austin Ruse.

The Culture of Life Foundation & Institute (CLF) presents itself as dedicated to science and loyal to truth. Its motto proclaims these aims proudly—with the addition of the phrase “faithful to the magisterium,” code for supporting the powerful, conservative elite of the Catholic hierarchy. Founded in 1997, CLF has been a low-profile group run by a board of directors drawn from the wealthy, white-gloved Catholic right. With a sprinkling of scientific advisors and Opus Dei members at the center of the organization, it has barely made a ripple on the DC political scene. It maintains a Web site that is woefully out of date and occasionally sponsors Congressional testimony on scientific questions surrounding abortion issues (perpetuating the repudiated claim linking abortion and breast cancer), stem cell research and cloning. Foundations in the reproductive health field report receiving occasional mailings from CLF claiming scientific proof that supports its antichoice agenda.

The Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-FAM), on the other hand, has been the brash newcomer in the field. Led by Catholic convert Austin Ruse, C-FAM has cast itself as the thorn in the side of the reproductive health movement at the United Nations. With little regard for facts and a joyfully announced intention to break all the rules of civil discourse, C-FAM has launched public attacks on every UN agency, most especially UNFPA, an organization that provides invaluable assistance to women and families around the world, and all family planning and reproductive rights NGOs at the UN. Even the revered children’s charity, UNICEF, has been maligned by C-FAM. So intemperate is Ruse that he did not bother to veil his contempt when he told the Mindszenty Foundation (a 1950’s Cold War

anticommunist group founded by Phyllis Schlafly's sister) that a Vatican diplomat had offered him absolution if he "took out [Hillary Clinton]—and not on a date."<sup>i</sup> Given the obvious style difference between C-FAM and CLF, Ruse must be a "family values" hire for the Culture of Life Foundation.

He recently married fellow convert and the US bishops' DC-based antichoice spokeswoman Cathleen Cleaver. While C-FAM is based in New York, Ruse has been a regular on the conservative Republican scene in DC. He has occasionally attended the weekly K Street republican strategy meetings with Grover Norquist and friends, lobbied Congress, met with antichoice congressional staff, and made media contacts. Now, with the marriage of muscle (C-FAM) and manners (CLF), antichoice politics are likely to sink to a new but highly visible low in DC.

### *What is the Culture of Life Foundation & Institute?*

It appears that until a few years ago, the Culture of Life Foundation & Institute was a small, behind-the-scenes group of wealthy, anti-choice, right-wing Catholics. More recently though, its finances and backers have improved, and the addition of Ruse as president signals a new era of anticipated aggressiveness and attention that the group has not previously enjoyed; in fact, the organization is currently recruiting for a communications staff person. Ruse commented on the partnership now formed between C-FAM and CLF, saying, "C-FAM will continue its role as the watchdog of the UN and will maintain its office in New York. C-FAM will expand its purview to include the US State Department and all other federal agencies that affect international social policy."<sup>ii</sup>

### **CLF's Incorporation and Funding**

The Culture of Life Foundation began operations in 1997. Its offices are currently located at 1413 K St, NW, in Washington, DC. However, it appears that the organization doesn't technically exist according to the District of Columbia corporate records, which would call into question its compliance with DC corporate registration requirements, and perhaps create state and federal tax issues. A search

of corporate registrations for the Culture of Life Foundation and/or Institute indicated that Washington was the only jurisdiction in which Culture of Life was ever legally registered to operate—and further, current records indicate that the group’s status has been revoked. A follow-up call to the DC Corporations Division of the Business and Professional Licensing Administration verbally confirmed that the group’s status was revoked on September 9, 2002, and no change to that status has been found.

Information provided on the organization’s Web site differentiates between the Culture of Life Foundation and the Culture of Life Institute, and federal 990 filing forms indicate the Culture of Life Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3), but the status of the Institute is less clear. The mission statement of the Foundation is “to provide the leadership and financial resources to promote a universal commitment to protect and nurture all human life from conception until natural death.” The mission of the Institute is “to analyze, interpret, and communicate both existing and new scientific data and factual research on issues concerning human life and the family. Our purpose is to inform, unify, and affirm all those who seek the truth about the dignity of human life, defending it in all its fullness from conception until natural death.”<sup>iii</sup> However, much of the group’s Web site content refers to the “Culture of Life Foundation & Institute” and disclaimers state that the Culture of Life Foundation & Institute is (as opposed to “are”) a 501(c)(3). Donors are instructed to make contributions payable to the Culture of Life Foundation. If the Institute is a 501(c)(4), rather than a 501(c)(3) like the Foundation, they are more likely to undertake activities that would require them to register with the House and Senate as lobbyists. Staff in Senate offices confirmed that the group has not registered to lobby the Senate.

In CLF’s federal 990 tax forms claiming a 501(c)(3) status, a review of income sources yields some interesting information. Worthy of note, the 2001 990 filings indicate income in large chunks, mostly from a few individuals. Among them, a contribution of \$86,000 in stock of the AES Corporation (whose president is Dick Darman, the first President Bush’s director of the Office of Management and

Budget), and other tax-deductible cash contributions from unnamed persons of \$63,000, \$17,000, and \$10,000 (of \$247,000 total listed gifts, grants, and contributions for that year). The 990s also indicate disbursements of almost \$15,000 to “consultants.”

Filings for 2002 show large donations from board members, including Mary Agee (\$25,000), John Whelan (\$55,000), Carol Saeman—through the Saeman Family Foundation (\$50,000), and Bowie Kuhn (\$5,000). A former business associate of Whelan’s, Frank Ladner, contributed \$15,000. The 2002 990 indicates expenditures of over \$50,000 on salaries and wages, and over \$20,000 on consultants. In this filing, the distinction between the Foundation and the Institute has been lost, and the Foundation is described as one that gathers and summarizes information, and then disseminates it through various communications methods, including publishing newsletters, targeting medical students with their information, and issuing press releases, among others.

CLF was reportedly the recipient of contributions from Mark Belnick. Belnick’s funds came from an allegedly illegal windfall profit from Tyco, the New York conglomerate owned by Dennis Koslowski, with businesses in fields as disparate as electronic security, packaging equipment, and medical products. The *Wall Street Journal* recently printed an exposé on the goings-on at Tyco.<sup>iv</sup> The article notes,

“In July 2000, Mark Belnick, then the top in-house lawyer at Tyco International Ltd., received a \$2 million payment toward a \$12 million bonus. For Mr. Belnick, it was the latest reward in a meteoric legal career that ran from some of the highest-profile business cases of the 1980s and 1990s to Tyco, a hugely successful conglomerate and Wall Street darling.

“Today prosecutors say that payment bought Mr. Belnick’s silence about the looting of Tyco by its extravagant former chief executive, L. Dennis Kozlowski. Mr. Belnick, facing criminal charges, has become one of the most celebrated casualties of the recent wave of corporate wrongdoing.

“But few people know just what he did with that \$2 million. Almost immediately, he gave most of it to a small Catholic college in California and to the Culture of Life Foundation, a Catholic pro-life group in Washington, according to e-mails to and from Mr. Belnick at the time and interviews with people involved with the donations.

“Three months earlier, Mr. Belnick, formerly an observant Jew, had quietly converted to Catholicism and become an active supporter of Opus Dei, a conservative group within the church. While prosecutors accuse his boss, Mr. Kozlowski, of taking millions from Tyco to buy artwork and posh homes and to entertain friends in Sardinia, Mr. Belnick was using some of his allegedly unlawful Tyco haul for an entirely different purpose. In addition to his donations to the Catholic college and foundation, he gave money to a Catholic television network, two parishes and an Opus Dei bookstore and information center.

...

“Mr. Belnick joined an elite fraternity of Father [John] McCloskey’s converts. Others include Lawrence Kudlow, the economist and television commentator; Sen. Sam Brownback of Kansas and conservative political columnist Robert Novak. Bernard Nathanson, a onetime abortion doctor and pro-choice advocate who became a Catholic with the priest’s guidance, helped counsel Mr. Belnick on his conversion.

“In July 2000, after he received the \$2 million cash payment as part of his \$12 million bonus from Tyco, Mr. Belnick gave most of the money to Thomas Aquinas [College in California] and the Culture of Life Foundation, the Catholic pro-life group in Washington, according to e-mails and interviews. Thomas Aquinas listed Mr. Belnick in a press release as a “major benefactor” of a \$3.6 million residence hall for men that opened in January 2002. He persuaded three of Tyco’s outside law firms, Wilmer Cutler and New York’s Cravath, Swaine & Moore and Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy to make a total of about \$20,000 in donations to Thomas Aquinas to

mark the college's 30th anniversary in September 2001, according to people at both firms.

“Father McCloskey introduced Mr. Belnick to a number of Catholic fundraisers to whose organizations the lawyer made substantial contributions, according to their e-mail. One was Mary Cunningham Agee, former vice president of strategic planning at Bendix Corporation and the wife of former Bendix Chairman William Agee. Ms. Agee says Mr. Belnick “was very generous” to the Culture of Life Foundation, on whose board she serves as vice chairman. She declines to say how much Mr. Belnick, who also formerly served on the board, donated to the group.

Mr. Belnick also paid for programming Father McCloskey did for EWTN [Eternal Word Television Network, a cable channel that broadcasts ultra-conservative Catholic programming], and gave money to the Catholic Information Center and to a Catholic-oriented political action committee in Ann Arbor, Mich., begun by Domino's Pizza founder Thomas Monaghan and Mr. [Bowie] Kuhn [a director of the Culture of Life Foundation].”

## Who's Who

Most members of the Culture of Life Foundation & Institute's Board of Directors are prominent members of the antichoice community, with backgrounds ranging from business to politics to medicine to law to the clergy. John M. Whelan, chairman, and Mary Cunningham Agee, vice chairman, are from the financial and corporate world. Alan Keyes ran (unsuccessfully) for office a number of times, worked for the State Department and served in the first and second Reagan administrations in foreign affairs posts. Fr. Joseph D. Fessio, S.J., is a well-known conservative clergy member and serves as chancellor at Ave Maria University, while Bernard Dobranski is dean at the Ave Maria School of Law. Both schools were founded by Thomas Monaghan (Domino's Pizza magnate), the law school to educate lawyers to take on reform of *Roe v. Wade*, and other laws that offend his sense of morality. Dr. Robert P. George is a conservative law professor, Dr. Hans Geisler is a medical doctor, Carol Saeman is a long-time proponent of natural family planning, and rounding out the board is Bowie K. Kuhn, treasurer and vice chairman, former commissioner of baseball, who works closely with Thomas Monaghan (of the Ave Maria schools) and the immoderate American Life League. CLF's ecclesiastical advisors include conservative Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver, and Opus Dei priest C. John McCloskey, well known for converting a host of influential far-right conservatives to Catholicism. More information on the major players follows.

John Whelan, chairman of the board of directors of the Culture of Life Foundation, has served as president and chief executive officer of Golden Rule Insurance Company since 1983. Whelan holds a B.S. from Drexel University, Philadelphia, and an M.B.A. from Columbia University, New York. He is the immediate past president of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis Catholic Community Foundation.

Mary Cunningham Agee graduated in 1979 from the Harvard Business School with a Master's Degree in Finance and International Business. She serves on a variety of advisory boards and boards of directors including the National Memorial



for the Unborn, Women Affirming Life, and the executive committee for the Catholic Campaign for America, an organization of conservative Catholics founded in 1992 as an offshoot of the Christian Coalition in the Ralph Reed era. The Catholic Campaign for America was to recruit Catholics to the electoral agenda of the Christian Coalition. She is the founder and president of the Nurturing Network, an antichoice organization that provides free support to single, pregnant “college and working women...[including] professional counseling, medical services, residential assistance, educational, employment and financial resources.”<sup>v</sup>

Corporate controversy has followed Cunningham Agee from her early days at Seagrams with her then-boss, now-husband, William Agee. Later, according to the *New York Times*, when her husband was head of Morrison Knudsen, “Mrs. Agee...recast the company’s foundation [Morrison Knudsen Corporation Foundation] to support her own interests, including a separate nonprofit group to help women avoid abortion. [The Nurturing Network] also called on the company for considerable support like graphics and printing, computer equipment, and security services.”<sup>vi</sup>

Furthermore, an article in *Forbes* magazine detailed how some staff at Morrison Knudsen blamed Cunningham Agee for the “low morale” at the company, that she made her “imperial presence” felt, how she redecorated the corporate jet, and prompted several of her husband’s secretaries to leave.<sup>vii</sup> Cunningham Agee and her husband William Agee also came under fire for their use of company resources for personal use, including trips using the company jet that were so frequent that the IRS said their value should be reported as taxable income.<sup>viii</sup> Another example took place in 1991, “when the company needed graphics rushed through for the bidding on an important job, employees found that the graphics department was too busy, said a senior officer of the company at the time. Its employees were making life-sized unicorns [sic] for an Agee birthday party.”<sup>ix</sup>

Alan Keyes was twice nominated unsuccessfully for US Senate in Maryland, and ran for president of the United States unsuccessfully in the 1996 and 2000 campaigns. He holds a Ph.D. in government from Harvard University, and served

as ambassador to the UN Economic and Social Council. He also tried his hand at being a television talk show host, but his MSNBC offering “Alan Keyes is Making Sense” was pulled after only five months, following protests of some of his programming that included such topics as Laura Schlessinger expressing the view that birth control started America down the road to hell, and Keyes assailing a California law aimed at preventing violence against gay and lesbian teenagers.

Citing the *Dominion Post*, the (West Virginia) *Charleston Gazette* reported “Former Republican presidential candidate Alan Keyes visited Morgantown and said abortion is ‘another form of terrorism.’”<sup>x</sup> He made these comments at the West Virginians for Life Headquarters where he appeared with National Right to Life Committee President Wanda Franz. Keyes picked up on this theme again during a March 8, 2002, news conference before a Care Net Pregnancy Centers fundraising dinner. According to the Allentown, PA, *Morning Call*, “Keyes linked the fight against terrorism with the fight against abortion. To Keyes, the taking of innocent life by terrorists parallels aborting the innocent unborn.”<sup>xi</sup> On broader social issues, Keyes said, “The issues of crime, the issues that are concerning us with health, the issues that concern us with family – all these things on which we spend trillions of dollars are traceable to the moral decay of this country that results from the abandonment of our moral principles.”<sup>xii</sup>

Bernard Dobranski resigned his position as dean of the law school at Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, in 1999, to accept the same position at the newly founded Ave Maria School of Law, an institution bankrolled by Thomas S. Monaghan, founder and former chairman of Domino’s Pizza, who desired to build a law school that was unquestionably “Catholic,” adhering especially to the current pope’s notions of increasing the hierarchy’s control over what is taught in Catholic schools.<sup>xiii</sup> Dobranski envisioned this school filling a void: “The rule of law must be founded in a belief that there is an objective, moral order. This is something no law school does effectively.”<sup>xiv</sup>

His teaching staff at the university includes former judge Robert Bork, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, who teaches “Moral Foundations

of the Law,” one of many courses at Ave Maria focused on their mission to evaluate laws in light of conservative Catholic teachings. The school’s board of governors includes Cardinals Edward Egan of New York and Adam Maida of Detroit, Helen Alvare (former antichoice spokeswoman for the US bishops), Congressman Henry Hyde, Appeals Court Judges James Buckley and James L. Ryan (the latter recently upheld the constitutionality of Ohio’s late-term abortion ban), Kate O’Beirne (Washington editor of the *National Review*), and fellow CLF board members Joseph Fessio, Robert George, and Alan Keyes.

Fr. Joseph D. Fessio was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest in 1972, and is co-founder of Catholic Radio Network. Fessio founded the conservative St. Ignatius Institute at the University of San Francisco, which “functioned as an enclave of strict orthodoxy at the relatively liberal university.”<sup>xv</sup> In 2001, new USF president Reverend Stephen Privett dismissed Fessio and another St. Ignatius Institute director. Fessio responded by meeting with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the Vatican’s guardian of orthodoxy, to have details of the incident passed on to Pope John Paul II. Privett characterized this move as “McCarthyite.”<sup>xvi</sup> Despite his dismissal from USF, Fessio has found another outlet for his penchant for conservative education, and is now chancellor of the upstart Ave Maria University (in Naples, Florida), another undertaking in ultra-conservative Catholic higher education by Thomas Monaghan, founder of the Ave Maria School of Law.

Dr. Robert P. George is the McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence and director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University, and a leading member of the Federalist Society. He served as a Presidential Appointee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights from 1993 until 1998. He is a member of the President’s Council on Bioethics, and of the independent Council on Foreign Relations. Dr. George is a prolific writer, contributing to such periodicals as the conservative Catholic magazine *First Things*, the *National Review*, and newspapers, as well as authoring several books on natural law theory. In 1996, he participated in a symposium sponsored by *First Things* entitled “The End of Democracy: The Judicial Usurpation of Politics” with

contributors including Hadley Arkes, Walter Berns, Robert Bork, Robert George, Mary Ann Glendon, Russell Hittinger, Norman Podhoretz, and George Weigel. In his contribution called "The Tyrant State," George stated, "The courts, sometimes abetted by, and almost always acquiesced in, federal and state legislators, have imposed upon the nation immoral policies that pro-life Americas cannot accept."<sup>xvii</sup>

In an article posted on the Culture of Life Foundation & Institute Web site, Professor George calls the right to reproductive choice recognized by the Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade* "the regime of judicially imposed abortion-on-demand."<sup>xviii</sup> He goes on to make it clear that "pro-life citizens" believe "the need to reverse Roe [is] the most urgent consideration in deliberating about possible Supreme Court nominees, should vacancies occur."<sup>xix</sup>

Former baseball commissioner and current sales broker for professional sports teams, Bowie K. Kuhn is CLF's treasurer and a vice chairman. Mr. Kuhn recently lent his name to a campaign by the American Life League that uses endorsements by major league baseball players to entice donations to advance ALL's efforts to build a "campus" that advances antiabortion, anti-stem cell, and anti-cloning research, and other similar positions in an educational format, training future antichoice activists. He has served as an advisor to Thomas Monaghan on his advisory boards formerly for Domino's Pizza and currently for the Ave Maria Funds, where he screens for "morally responsible investing" with co-member Phyllis Schlafly, among others. The investment advisor for the fund recently noted that "The Catholic Advisory Board [for the Fund] feels that Planned Parenthood is an evil organization...."<sup>xx</sup> Kuhn also works on the "Ave Maria List," a political action committee created, he says, because "Emily's List needed some counterpoint."<sup>xxi</sup>

CLF's "ecclesiastical advisors" include Fr. John McCloskey, a former chaplain at Princeton University, papal intimate, and staunch conservative whose ideology stands in stark contrast to the reality of the modern world. He calls himself a "salesman for the [Catholic] church," is a fervent Opus Dei member, runs the Washington, DC, Catholic Information Center, and is perhaps most well-known for converting conservative heavy hitters to Catholicism. Among McCloskey's converts

are television commentator Lawrence Kudlow, political columnist Robert Novak, former prochoice advocate and NARAL founder Bernard Nathanson, and failed Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork.

In an August 2002 article, *Slate* Web site described his strategy for the church as two-pronged, “Bring in conservative evangelical Protestants like [Rep. Sam] Brownback [R-Kan] while at the same time casting out liberal Catholics of all stripes. McCloskey is the anti-Garry Wills, telling American Catholics who dissent from some church teachings why you aren’t a Catholic. ‘A liberal Catholic is oxymoronic,’ he says. ‘The definition of a person who disagrees with what the Catholic Church is teaching is called a Protestant.’”<sup>xxii</sup> His advice for young people on choosing a college includes the following exhortation, “Be sure to read the colleges’ mission statement[s] . . . . If you encounter words like standard, belief, maturity, conviction, commitment, marriage, family, evangelization, culture, character, truth and knowledge, take a closer look. On the other hand, if you encounter words and phrases like values, openness, just society, search, diversity, and professional preparation, move on.”<sup>xxiii</sup> McCloskey’s projects were also recipients of large gifts from former Tyco executive Mark Belnick, another of McCloskey’s converts.

### **CLF’s Issues**

According to its Web site, the Culture of Life Foundation & Institute focuses primarily on eight broad issue categories: (1) abortion; (2) stem cell research; (3) cloning; (4) contraception; (5) “culture of death” vs. “culture of life”; (6) homosexuality; (7) assisted reproductive technology; and (8) population control. Other topics such as euthanasia are also discussed. In order to bolster its claims of legitimacy in these areas, especially in medicine, CLF boasts numerous advisors in the fields of medicine and biology, sociology, economics, philosophy/theology, and law/public policy. Little information could be found on respected, peer-reviewed research by these advisors, although many of them do contribute articles to the CLF Web site and newsletter, and to like-minded publications and organizations.

CFL disseminates its information and promotes its positions on these issues through fact sheets and articles posted on its Web site, press releases and media hits, hosting and participating in conferences, seminars, and briefings, providing Congressional testimony, and producing newsletters and publications. While there are no position statements explicitly endorsed by the Culture of Life Foundation & Institute, the tenor and bias of the articles and “fact sheets” on its Web site make clear the organization’s position on the issues. Examples of their statements on some of these issues follow.

On Abortion. CLF unequivocally opposes abortion. There is no indication in its materials that it makes any exception to this whatsoever—even in the case of rape, incest, or danger to the life of the woman. On the CLF Web site, the Presbyterians Pro-Life “Position Statement on Abortion” is posted. This position statement (which criticizes the official statement of the Presbyterian Church (USA)) opposes abortion in cases of rape or incest and states the following with regard to situations where the life or health of a woman is in jeopardy: “In circumstances where physical complications of pregnancy develop, every attempt should be made to preserve the lives of both mother and child.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

A great deal of CLF’s focus around abortion relates to the alleged connection between abortion and breast cancer. No fewer than seven fact sheets and articles in the abortion section of the “Science & Medicine” page on CLF’s Web site spread misinformation on the alleged link between abortion and higher rates of breast cancer,<sup>xxv</sup> a theory that has been debunked by the National Institutes of Health’s National Cancer Institute as recently as February 2003, and just this year by a group of Swedish researchers in a study of nearly 4,000 women.<sup>xxvi</sup> In “Words from the President” in the Fall 1999 CLF newsletter, Mary Cunningham Agee writes that “the undeniable link between breast cancer and abortion is only the ‘tip of an iceberg’ of damage that medical science is now able to reveal about this procedure.”<sup>xxvii</sup>

Other articles call emergency contraception “emergency abortion,” and take on medications such as labor-inducing pharmaceuticals and RU-486 overstating their risks to pregnant women. The site also presents selected definitions regarding

pregnancy and prenatal development, drawing on a range of sources, some of them utilizing studies on mouse development, outdated research, preliminary studies, or outright opinion rather than proven scientific research on human development.

On Stem Cell Research. The vast majority of CLF's mentions in the press involve its opposition to all forms of stem cell research and federal funding to support it. CLF was one of the signatories of a position statement calling on Congress to "maintain the existing ban against harmful federally funded human embryo research and make explicit its application to stem cell research requiring the destruction of human embryos."<sup>xxviii</sup>

In response to a May 9, 2000, letter from then-CLF President and prominent Opus Dei member Robert A. Best asking him to reiterate his support for CLF's opposition to federal funding for stem cell research, then-candidate George W. Bush replied, "I oppose federal funding for stem cell research that involves destroying living human embryos."<sup>xxix</sup> The contents of this letter generated a great deal of controversy when the Bush administration reconsidered its position on the issue.<sup>xxx</sup> When asked what the response of pro-life individuals might be to the administration's policy reversal, Best stated, "I think there'll be a very strong reaction among people who believe in the sanctity of human life from the moment of conception. I think they'll feel betrayed. I think they'll look elsewhere for another candidate in the future. I think it opens up the door to a third party, a pro-life party."<sup>xxxi</sup>

On Cloning. CLF provides a cloning section on its "Science and Medicine" page, including links to testimony submitted by CLF's Robert Best to the Senate Subcommittee on Science, Technology & Space explaining the organization's opposition to all forms of cloning, including therapeutic cloning of human embryos for research, linking such practices to Nazi science experiments.<sup>xxxii</sup>

On Contraception. A number of articles and fact sheets on contraception provided by CLF on its Web site mischaracterize scientific findings on contraception and exaggerate the associated risks.<sup>xxxiii</sup> For example, the Web page entitled "Oral Contraceptives Deadly for Mom and Babies..." provides the abstract of an article

published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The actual article in JAMA was entitled “Risk of Breast Cancer With Oral Contraceptive Use in Women With a Family History of Breast Cancer,” and its results are not nearly as extreme as the CLF headline would lead readers to believe. The results of the study suggest that women who have ever used earlier formulations of oral contraceptives and who also have a first-degree relative with breast cancer may be at particularly high risk for breast cancer.<sup>xxxiv</sup> This hardly merits CLF’s description of contraceptives as “deadly.” Another page on the CLF Web site informs readers that “contraception clearly leads to many abortions by those who have sex outside of marriage.”<sup>xxxv</sup>

Dr. William J. Hogan, a Maryland physician and one of CLF’s advisors on medicine and biology has offered his own view of pregnancy and contraception. He maintains that pregnancy begins with the fertilization of an egg, and therefore that pharmaceuticals such as emergency contraceptives are abortifacient. This is a commonly repeated claim by CLF and its advisors, and one which it seeks to promote though it stands at odds with medically accepted definitions of pregnancy, abortion, and contraceptive effects.

The contraception section also has a defense of natural family planning by CLF ecclesiastical advisor Archbishop Charles Chaput, a page on “condom effectiveness” which claims the condom failure rate is between 10 and 30 percent for contraception and disparages their use for disease prevention, and a testimonial from a pharmacist who not only refused to dispense progestin-only contraceptives, but actively discouraged patients (who had prescriptions from their physicians) from taking their prescribed medications.

“Culture of Life” vs. “Culture of Death.” Battling what is characterized as the current “culture of death” in the United States and replacing it with a “culture of life” is a theme that runs throughout the CLF Web site. Former president Robert A. Best discusses it in his article, “Our Nobility” and notes “the parallels between our society and that of Germany, even before Hitler.”<sup>xxxvi</sup>

The Summer 2000 issue of CLF’s newsletter features an article by Dr. Hogan (see above) entitled “Culture of Death and the Medical Profession” that, without



citation or evidence, accuses the “abortion industry” of taking “the culture of death to a new level of barbarism through the sale of dismembered infant body parts” and again links the right to choose to Nazism.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

On Homosexuality. Articles and fact sheets on the CLF Web site assert that homosexuality is “a symptom of a developmental gender identity disorder” that is preventable and treatable.<sup>xxxviii</sup> One provides a review and a number of quotes from *Homosexuality: A Freedom Too Far* by Charles W. Socarides, including: “Homosexuals need and deserve our tolerance, our understanding and our compassion. Their conflicts took root in the soil they were planted in long ago. But, unlike plants, they are not stuck to those roots. Their capacity for healing and repair is greater than they know.”<sup>xxxix</sup> He maintains that “gay is not good.”

Dr. Socarides is another of CLF’s medical advisors, and is also president of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH). NARTH promotes “reparative” or “conversion” therapy, viz., therapy aimed at changing patients’ sexual orientation from gay to straight, and begins from the assumption that homosexuality is a disease that needs a cure. Socarides founded the organization in 1992, and though it has maintained some adherents, the use of reparative therapy has been roundly criticized by groups such as the American Psychological Association, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Counseling Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the National Association of Social Workers. The American Psychological Association’s Council of Representatives in 1997 took issue with the so-called reparative or conversion therapies promoted by Socarides (among others), passing a resolution regarding treatment aimed at changing a patient’s sexual orientation. Then-president of APA’s Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual issues said that the APA members were “concerned about such [“conversion”] therapies and their potential harm to patients.”<sup>xl</sup>

On Assisted Reproductive Technology. Included in the articles on “assisted reproductive technology” is “Artificial Fertilization and the Christian Response” which asserts that “participation in artificial reproduction conflicts with the Lord’s

moral order.”<sup>xli</sup> A piece by then-communications manager of CLF, Tara Seyfer, states that in vitro fertilization “includes a multitude of harms to the human person. There are many other options which a couple can turn to, more in keeping with maintaining the dignity of the human person and which do not entail the destruction of human life, a production ethic, or a dissociation of the marital act from its true meanings.”<sup>xlii</sup>

On Population Control. Warnings of a population “implosion” and the consequences of lower fertility rates and longer life spans abound.<sup>xliii</sup>

### ***What is C-FAM?***

New CLF president Austin Ruse comes from the antiabortion, anti-family planning organization the “Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute,” also known as C-FAM. C-FAM is a nonprofit organization, claiming, according to its Web site, “to serve the needs of United Nations delegates, extra-governmental and non-governmental organizations, missions and consulates.”<sup>xliv</sup> C-FAM further claims that it advances issues such as population, development, and the environment “within the framework of the family as the fundamental unit of society.”<sup>xlv</sup>

However, C-FAM’s actions reveal its true purpose. Human Life International (HLI), a US antichoice organization that was denied recognition by the United Nations, founded both C-FAM (or CAFHRI, as it was then called) and the Population Research Institute (PRI). As you probably are aware, PRI has claimed to conduct “research” on the involvement of UNFPA in coercive family planning practices in China—research that has been proven wrong by a number of independent observers. C-FAM has been active at UN conferences, and has taken positions extremely hostile to the United Nations and much of its work on international development issues. C-FAM’s false and misleading rhetoric and intimidation tactics expose its intent to break down negotiations and curtail advancement of reproductive and women’s rights.

In addition to its lobbying efforts at the UN, C-FAM reaches its supporters by means of its "Friday Fax," a weekly e-mail sent to subscribers. In it, Ruse and colleague Doug Sylva rail against what they see as modern evils, calling on people to oppose the UN's efforts on many fronts, often citing as "proof" for their indignation allegations found only in previous installments of the Friday Fax. Some of the issues getting the most attention recently include defunding UNFPA, opposing CEDAW (the landmark Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, often described as the international women's bill of rights), opposing all forms of cloning, opposing anti-discrimination efforts for GLBT persons, promoting the "Global Gag Rule," and criticizing UNICEF's educational efforts, among others. C-FAM's more overt lobbying efforts include sending action alerts and inciting supporters to call and e-mail the White House and Congress to press C-FAM's opinions on national decision makers.

Internationally, recipients of C-FAM's missives have been asked to contact Members of European Parliament and other international policy makers to urge them to oppose UNFPA and cloning, support the "ABC" approach to AIDS prevention, and fight against the proposed UN resolution condemning discrimination based on sexual orientation. Here are some examples of C-FAM's messages.

On UNFPA. C-FAM's opinions on UNFPA are made clear in a "white paper" authored by staffer Doug Sylva, in which he states, "UNFPA has been engaged for decades in a most radical strategy: under the guise of 'population control' to change the course of human sexuality by all means possible: abortion, overturning of parental rights, riding roughshod over sovereignty rights of nations, trampling on the religious tenets of most faiths, strong-arming nations into acceptance. In pursuing all of this UNFPA hides behind the skirts of the new radical woman and spins criticism of these practices as oppression of women and their rights."<sup>xlvi</sup> In addition to this publication, UNFPA has been the target of Ruse's "Friday Fax" misinformation campaign more than any other body.

Ruse collaborated with the Population Research Institute to successfully pressure the Bush administration to cut off the \$34 million US contribution to the UN Family Planning Fund. According to *Salon.com*, this was done “largely by fabricating evidence that the Population Fund supports coerced abortion in China, a charge that the administration’s own investigators found to be baseless.”<sup>xlvii</sup> The article goes on to describe how Ruse advised an audience at the Conservative Political Action Conference “about how the US could fully extricate itself from all its international treaties. His was the moderate position; another man on his panel wanted to pull out of the UN altogether.”<sup>xlviii</sup>

On CEDAW. As the Bush administration has been considering its position on ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), “social conservatives, led by Austin Ruse’s Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, are lobbying it to oppose.”<sup>xlix</sup> Ruse has characterized CEDAW as “just about the most dangerous treaty that the US government has ever considered ratifying, because it calls for the absolute leveling of any kind of distinction between men and women, at every level of society, including in the home.”<sup>1</sup> Ruse encouraged people to “weigh in by calling the White House ... and simply saying ‘Unsign CEDAW.’ The Bush administration is determining its position right now, and they ... will listen to what ... taxpayers want from this consideration.”<sup>li</sup>

On Gay Rights. In keeping with its right-wing, often fundamentalist agenda on social issues, C-FAM is a vocal opponent of rights legislation for homosexuals. In fact, it attacks other UN efforts as liberal attempts to promote a “homosexual agenda.” For example, in a Friday Fax purporting to discuss the UN’s Draft Declaration on Commitment to HIV/AIDS, Ruse characterized its sponsors as “trying to use the document to impose what some describe as a gay-rights agenda—including gay marriage—on the rest of the world.”<sup>lii</sup> In 2003, Ruse argued against a proposal to expand the UN’s definition of discrimination to include discrimination based upon sexual orientation. Among his concerns was that the language could be used against the Catholic church forcing it to stop following discriminatory

employment practices.<sup>liii</sup> He also decried the fact that such a move would grant a strong basis in international law for expanded hate crimes legislation against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender citizens.<sup>liv</sup>

*On UNICEF.* Among the allegations leveled by Ruse against UNICEF is that it is a “major funder of a group promoting abortion/pornography for children.”<sup>lv</sup> He also claims that UNICEF is involved in the “production of sexually explicit, some would say obscene, sexual education manuals for adolescents,” and expressed outrage that condom use is discussed, or condoms made available, in any sexuality education program or health clinic for young people.<sup>lvi</sup> Ruse also laments UNICEF’s efforts in favor of girls’ education, decrying it as evidence of radical feminism taking over the agency.<sup>lvii</sup>

### *Austin Ruse*

Austin Ruse has pledged that C-FAM’s activity will continue unabated. He is retaining his title as president of C-FAM while assuming that same title at CLF. This move signals a likely increase in these same tactics and messages, but now focused on US governmental bodies and policy makers as well as on international officials.

Ruse brings with him to CLF board two members of the C-FAM board of directors: Robert Royal of the Faith and Reason Institute, and Steve Mosher of the Population Research Institute. The Faith and Reason Institute describes itself as a think tank devoted to “recover[ing] the ancient Western understanding of human knowledge and divine revelation as co-ordinate calls upon the human spirit that need to be translated into everyday practice. Unlike other institutions interested in religion, [it addresses] questions of economics, politics, public policy, science, technology, the environment, and public culture, from perspective of both faith and reason.”<sup>lviii</sup> It conducts seminars and conferences and undertakes research and publishing efforts to promote its concerns about America’s moral decay, the perils of globalization, and the need for bringing their message of faith to the public square. According to its Web site, the Faith and Reason Institute has moved, and now shares the same address and office suite as the Culture of Life Foundation.<sup>lix</sup>

The Population Research Institute, whose head is Steve Mosher, is an offshoot of the radical “Human Life International,” a vociferous antichoice group founded by Father Paul Marx. PRI operated under HLI’s auspices from 1989 until 1998, when it suddenly claimed no ties to the group – this despite the fact that Marx was listed as PRI’s chairman as late as 2000. Mosher came to PRI in 1995, after being excused from studies at Stanford University for, as the university said, “illegal and seriously unethical conduct” that “endangered his research subjects,” *Science* magazine reported at the time.<sup>lx</sup> One of the aspects of his field work that got him into trouble involved Chinese women, some of them shown in photographs undergoing abortions.<sup>lxi</sup> His antichoice, anti-China bias has not subsided over the past 20 years, and his group was instrumental in promoting the untenable allegation that UNFPA was involved in coercive abortion practices in China, leading to George W. Bush’s infamous denial of \$34 million to UNFPA. Despite several subsequent fact-finding missions that have disproved Mosher and PRI’s claims, his voice, aided by the patronage of Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ), continues to carry undue influence with the current administration.

Ruse’s primary focus over the past two years appears to have been wielding C-FAM’s influence to cut off funding to UNFPA and to alter language in official UN documents to align with his group’s conservative ideology. He has also lobbied against CEDAW, authored a number of articles, and spoken out in opposition to the Catholic laity having any say in the fate of Cardinal Law and Cardinal Egan after their misconduct in dealing with clergy sexual abuse in their dioceses was exposed. He even jokes about taking extreme measures, for example, as he related to the Mindszenty Foundation, when he told them that a Vatican diplomat had offered him absolution if he “took out [Hillary Clinton] – and not on a date.”<sup>lxii</sup>

*Ruse and the UN.* His tactics at the UN have demonstrated his single-minded approach coupled with his disrespect for his adversaries and various international bodies. He attempts to present himself and C-FAM as promoting human rights and educational efforts at the UN, while at the same time he deliberately thwarts the

work of UN conferences, blocking international consensus and attempts at cooperation among the states.

For example, referring to a meeting during Cairo+5, he said, “we sent our women into the radical Women’s Caucus, to take it over and wreak havoc.... [We sent] our least experienced lobbyists, teenagers mostly, to lobby the enemy delegations incessantly. . . [w]e absolutely wasted their time.” And further, “we broke every single rule of UN lobbying.” When commenting on whether he thinks the US should withdraw from the UN, he said, “to participate in the UN the way I do you must at least have a veneer of supporting the UN.” He sums up his work by saying, “We have so much fun. We sit in the corner of that conference room and cackle.... [I]t’s like working in a shooting gallery...and no matter where you shoot you hit something really good.”<sup>lxiii</sup>

Ruse in the media. As reported in the *Washington Post*, Ruse has promoted conservative organizations’ collaboration with hard-line fundamentalist governments, including Sudan, Libya, Iraq, and Iran, in order to halt the expansion of sexual and political protections and rights for gays, women, and children at United Nations conferences.<sup>lxiv</sup> The article goes on to detail how Ruse inflates the influence of C-FAM, and delights in frustrating the efforts of legitimate children’s and women’s advocates by using prohibited tactics. Ruse “boasted that his tactics were beginning to seize the initiative from advocates for the rights of children, women and gays. ... ‘We broke all the rules of U.N. lobbying, which forbids leafleting on the floor of a U.N. conference. We had our people fan out across the floor of the conference and we placed this letter in the hand of every delegate.’”<sup>lxv</sup>

Austin Ruse has contributed commentary and news reports continuing his critique of UNFPA,<sup>lxvi</sup> and attacking the use of the word “services” with regard to “reproductive health care” as it is used in UN documents, charging that it is simply a synonym for abortion. Ruse expresses hope that, “if the United States, the Holy See and the Islamic countries succeed in forever branding the phrase ‘reproductive health-care services’ as meaning abortion, then the phrase possibly may never be used again, and in a very small way the tide will have turned.”<sup>lxvii</sup> Another accuses

Senator Barbara Boxer of exhibiting “a strong anti-Catholic bias” at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing.<sup>lxviii</sup>

During a radio interview, Ruse asserted that the “problem with the sort of UN regime of contraceptives is that they tend to be harmful for women. Many types of contraceptives are abortifacient. The IUD, for instance, the morning after pill; these cause abortions. Other types of contraceptives cause cancer.”<sup>lxix</sup> However, citing the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, NARAL Pro-Choice America demonstrates that “no FDA-approved contraceptive method causes abortion.”<sup>lxx</sup> Furthermore, a study by the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute of Child Health and Human Development found no association between use of oral contraceptives and breast cancer risk for women between 35 and 64.<sup>lxxi</sup>

In regard to the clergy sex abuse scandal, Ruse was asked whether Cardinals Egan and Law should resign due to their involvement in shuffling abusive priests from one parish to another without warning parishioners. Ruse used the opportunity to blame the abuse on homosexuals in the priesthood.<sup>lxxii</sup> On another occasion Ruse revisited what he believes are the reasons behind the sexual abuse and the appropriate role of the laity in the scandal: “The problem is very clear. There’s a culture of dissent in the church and it has to do with the teachings of the church, the doctrine and also sexual morality in the church. Until those things are corrected, these problems will go on.”<sup>lxxiii</sup>

### **Ruse, C-FAM, and CLF in 2004**

Ruse’s move to the nation’s capital is part of a confluence of events that signals a new, serious lobbying effort on the part of conservative Catholics in the US to influence sexual and reproductive health and rights in this country and, by extension, around the world—especially in developing countries. While there has long been a conservative Catholic voice in DC—most notably and protractedly that of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, and most recently witnessed by *Crisis* magazine editor Deal Hudson’s sway with the Bush administration—we are about



to see increased, concerted efforts by right-wing Catholics to be political players “inside the beltway.”

The prochoice community can expect to see them, including Austin Ruse and the Culture of Life Foundation, playing a role in Washington politics like Ruse and C-FAM play at the UN. While it would be easy to overstate the influence of these groups and individuals, we cannot dismiss their work. Now that Ruse is on the scene in DC, he has some new targets, and uses the communication vehicles of his several allied organizations—CLF’s “Culture and Cosmos” newsletter, C-FAM’s “Friday Fax,” and PRI’s “Weekly Briefing”—to make it appear as though there is a mass of people supporting his radical positions, when really it’s just Austin Ruse and his small group of conservative Catholic funders spreading their rhetoric under different headlines.

We can expect that he will use the same tactics for misrepresenting and stalling important reproductive rights and health legislation in the US Congress that he has employed at the UN. Indeed, in the e-mail from C-FAM announcing its “strategic alliance” with the Culture of Life Foundation and Ruse’s move to Washington, Ruse said, “C-FAM will continue its role as watchdog of the UN and will retain its office in New York. C-FAM will expand its purview to include the US State Department and all other federal agencies that affect international social policy.”<sup>lxxiv</sup> The serious concerns about the impact of Ruse’s tactics cannot be underestimated; as Nicolaas Biegman, a former Dutch ambassador to NATO and one of many diplomats to have visited China to assess UNFPA’s activities there, stated, Ruse’s actions and statements about UNFPA are “criminally irresponsible.”<sup>lxxv</sup>

Ruse’s latest invectives have included claims that sexual education and promotion of condom use result in higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases, that educational efforts promoting condom use in the face of the AIDS epidemic are really promotions for homosexuality and promiscuity, and groundless allegations that UNICEF no longer advocates for the welfare of the world’s children. Although Catholics for a Free Choice has frequently been the target of Ruse’s tirades, he is now

taking on groups such as the Center for Reproductive Rights, claiming he's uncovered "secret abortion strategies"<sup>lxvii</sup> of the well-respected and effective organization that makes no secret of its platform or programs. Doubtless CRR will not be the last of the domestic reproductive rights and women's rights groups to be disparaged by Ruse and his cohorts.

The upcoming national elections may prove to be the most challenging to our work since CFFC's inception 30 years ago. We, and our collegial organizations, must be prepared to address the continued campaigns of misinformation and scare tactics that have been hallmarks of Austin Ruse's work, and will likely continue and even increase in this new forum.

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CATHOLICS FOR A FREE CHOICE (CFFC) is a nongovernmental organization with special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. It shapes and advances sexual and reproductive ethics that are based on justice, reflect a commitment to women's well-being, and respect and affirm the moral capacity of women and men to make sound decisions about their lives. Through discourse, education and advocacy, CFFC works in the United States and internationally to infuse these values into public policy, community life, feminist analysis, and Catholic social thinking and teaching.

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If you're interested in having more information right now, we have two excellent publications available on the how the Religious Right influences international politics. *Bad Faith at the UN* is an in-depth investigation of C-FAM's history, financing, and anti-reproductive rights activities on the international scene. *Preserving Power and Privilege* focuses on conservative Catholic influence in the European Union and explores what this means for EU policy, especially for sexual and reproductive rights in the EU and in the developing nations it supports. Each publication is available immediately for \$10 (US), including shipping and handling.

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