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(CNS photo/Reuters video)

This short piece is the sidebar to Peter Steinfel's analysis of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report on Sex Abuse in the Catholic Church.

Seldom has an eye-opening document concerning the church and sex abuse gone as unnoticed as the joint stipulation signed August 2, 2018, between Bishop Donald Trautman and Attorney General Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania's Office of the Attorney General. Trautman was one of a number of accused individuals who demanded last spring that, in the absence of any opportunity to defend their reputations before the grand jury, those sections of the report naming them should be redacted. In Trautman's case this would have meant redaction of much of the report regarding Erie. To avoid that, Trautman withdrew his demand. In return, the attorney general's office agreed that virtually all of the sweeping charges in the report were "not directed at Bishop Trautman." These included the statements that "all [victims] were brushed aside"; that "the main thing" was to avoid "scandal"; that "priests were raping little boys and girls and the men of God ... did nothing"; that diocesan officials knowingly "enabled offenders and endangered the welfare of children"; and that they blocked law enforcement from investigating "crimes against children."

The few news reports of this joint stipulation stressed Trautman's withdrawal of his petition for redaction and not Shapiro's rather remarkable withdrawal of core elements of the report's charges. One wonders what the impact would have been had other Pennsylvania bishops made similar demands. On December 3, 2018, citing the rights to due process and protection of one's reputation in Pennsylvania's constitution, the state's supreme court ruled that the demanded redactions should remain permanent.

In his press conference of August 14, 2018, Attorney General Shapiro managed to even the score with Bishop Trautman by detailing the crimes of Erie molesters and making several demonstrably false statements about how Trautman had handled them.

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