

MICHIGAN AG NESSEL SLAPPED DOWN BY JUDGE

A federal district court judge in Michigan has upheld the religious freedom of a Catholic foster care and adoption agency, while calling out the “religious targeting” engaged in by Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel.

At issue is whether faith-based foster care and adoption agencies may refer same-sex and unmarried heterosexual couples to other agencies, rather than be forced to place children with such couples themselves, in violation of their religious beliefs.

As district court judge Robert Jonker explained in his 32-page ruling, the Michigan legislature in 2015 enacted a law upholding the right of faith-based agencies to adhere to the teachings of their Church. But Nessel opposed the law, promised in her campaign not to enforce it, and last spring entered into a settlement with the ACLU whereby the state would terminate its contracts with faith-based agencies that refuse to violate the tenets of their religion.

St. Vincent Catholic Charities of Lansing, Michigan, which includes foster care and adoption among its many services, challenged Nessel’s policy in court; yesterday judge Jonker ruled in favor of St. Vincent, blocking the state from terminating its contract with the Catholic agency.

“The record demonstrates,” the judge concluded, “that the State’s new position targets St. Vincent’s religious beliefs.”

Jonker was unstinting in his rebuke of Nessel for her anti-Catholic bigotry.

He noted that she referred to Michigan’s 2015 religious freedom law as “indefensible,” labeling its supporters “hate

mongers” and charging that it’s only purpose was “discriminatory animus.”

Jonker wrote that Nessel’s 2018 campaign and her statements as attorney general “create a strong inference that the State’s real target is the religious beliefs and confessions of St. Vincent, and not discriminatory conduct.” Moreover, she sought to terminate the state’s contract “simply because St. Vincent adheres to its sincerely held religious belief that marriage is an institution created by God to join a single man to a single woman.” Furthermore, this “strongly suggests that the State’s real goal is not to promote non-discriminatory child placements, but to stamp out St. Vincent’s religious belief” and replace it “with a State-orthodoxy test that prevents Catholic believers from participating.”

“All of this,” he concluded, “supports a strong inference that St. Vincent was targeted based on its religious belief, and that it was Defendant Nessel who targeted it.”

The judge said Nessel’s policy—which would “flout the letter and stated intention of the Michigan legislature”— “actually undermines the state’s stated goals of preventing discriminatory conduct and maximizing available placements for children.”

“Shuttering St. Vincent would create significant disruption for the children in its care, who already face an unpredictable home life and benefit from stability,” Jonker wrote. “It would also hurt the foster and adoptive parents who rely on St. Vincent for support and would have to find new resources.”

We are most pleased with the judge’s ruling because the Catholic League has been exposing Nessel as an anti-Catholic bigot since she declared her candidacy for this office. She has finally received her comeuppance.

BUTTIGIEG NEEDS TO MAN UP

Abortionist Ulrich Klopfer has legally killed thousands of babies in South Bend, Indiana, home to its mayor and presidential hopeful Pete Buttigieg. After refusing to speak to the latest news—2,246 fetal remains were found in Klopfer's home—Buttigieg has finally spoken about this story. But his remarks show that he still refuses to man up.

Here is what Buttigieg said about his hometown abortionist. "Like everyone else, I find the news out of Illinois extremely disturbing, and I think it's important that it be fully investigated. I also hope it doesn't get caught up in politics at a time when women need access to healthcare. There's no question that what happened is disturbing. It's unacceptable. And it needs to be looked at more fully."

Spoken like a true Rhodes scholar.

His first dodge was to distance his South Bend abortionist from his hometown—the "products of conception" (as the pro-abortion fans like to call them)—were found in Klopfer's Illinois home, not in his South Bend clinic. Nice try, Pete, but no one is taking the bait. He's your guy.

His second dodge was to characterize what happened as "disturbing." No, getting a parking ticket is disturbing—finding thousands of human body parts in a home is horrifying.

His third dodge was his refusal to say what it is that disturbs him. After all, if he is okay with abortion, why is it disturbing to learn about over 2,000 fetal parts in the home of his hometown abortionist?

Notice how skillful Buttigieg is in the way he dances around the issue. "It's important that that be fully investigated." What is the that, Mr. Mayor? "I also hope it doesn't get caught up in politics...." What is the it that you are referring to? "There's no question what happened here is disturbing." What exactly was it that happened? "It's unacceptable. And it needs to be looked into fully." Again, what is the it that disturbs you? (Our italics.)

Whatever appeal this guy once had, it has vanished. A more deceitful candidate would be hard to find.

PRO-ABORTS SPIN ABORTION DECLINE

The abortion rate hit a 46-year low in 2017. This is the central finding reported by the Guttmacher Institute, a pro-abortion research organization that was formerly aligned with Planned Parenthood. It also found that there was a 7% decline in abortions since 2014. Pregnancy rates also declined.

To most Americans, regardless of their position on this subject, it is good news to learn that the abortion rate is now at its lowest rate since abortion was legalized. The reaction from the pro-abortion industry, however, is less than positive.

The Guttmacher study found that the abortion rate declined dramatically in those states that enacted more restrictive abortion laws. The authors of the study try to downplay the significance of these laws, saying that they "do not appear to have been the primary driver of declining abortion rates." But if that is the case, why are they worried about such laws? In

the same report they admit that “abortion bans would undoubtedly prevent many individuals from obtaining abortion care in clinical settings.”

Dr. Herminia Palacio, Guttmacher’s CEO and president, takes umbrage at the suggestion that restrictive abortion laws are responsible for the decline in abortions. “Lowering the abortion rate is not the goal here. The abortion rate is just a number.”

Of course, lowering the abortion rate is not the issue for the pro-abortion industry—it thrives when abortion rates increase—but to those of us who are concerned about the sanctity of innocent human life, the abortion rate is critically important.

To Dr. Palacio, the abortion rate is just like a bingo game of numbers. But the numbers matter because they give evidence of the number of babies killed in utero. Her linguistic sanitization of what the numbers mean reflects her macabre way of thinking about this subject.

Rachel Jones, one of the authors of the Guttmacher study, speculates that the decline in the abortion rate is a function of ObamaCare and the easy availability of birth control. “The anti-abortion activists will try to take credit for this decline,” she says, “but the facts don’t support their argument.” She is wrong.

The Guttmacher study is heavy on citing structural causes that impact on abortion rates, but is wholly neglectful of considering cultural causes.

A survey released in January by The Polling Company, a prominent research organization, found that “7 in 10 Millennials support limits on abortion through specific policies like parental notification, limiting abortions later in pregnancy like at 5 months of pregnancy, and opposition to government funding of abortion.” Similarly, it found that

“Only 7 percent shared the position of the Democratic Party Platform—abortion without any exceptions and funded by tax dollars.”

Students for Life Institute of America commissioned the poll, and its president, Kristan Hawkins, offered an explanation that the Guttmacher Institute cannot bear to hear. “Millennials have lived with the harsh realities of abortion all their lives and understand more than their parents’ generation that we must address the human rights issue of our day and make changes in defense of mothers and their preborn infants.”

Yes, it is sad but true that many Millennials know of friends who have shared stories about the horrors of abortion. Worse, some have learned that their own would-be-siblings had their lives taken from them. It is these kinds of experiences that drive young people away from the pro-abortion fanatics. And when coupled with the pictures of babies in the womb, they provide solid reasons why abortion rates have declined.

Anyone who is on the defensive about the news that abortion rates have declined to the lowest level since Roe v. Wade needs to reexamine what it is that makes them tick.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN SEMINARIES IS RARE

In a joint effort by researchers at the University of Notre Dame’s McGrath Institute for Church Life and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, a study of U.S. seminarians found that six percent have experienced some form of sexual harassment. It was also

determined that 84 percent said that their administration and faculty took reports of sexual misconduct very seriously. Seventy-five percent said such behavior was “not at all a problem,” and nearly nine in ten said there is none or little talk of sexual promiscuity at their seminary.

This is a significant change from the 1970s when sexual misconduct at U.S. seminaries was a serious problem. The sexual revolution flourished during that decade, impacting the Church as well as the larger society. That was a time when Fr. Andrew Greeley spoke about the “Lavender Mafia” of homosexual subcultures in the seminaries.

The media are not likely to run with this story as it doesn’t fit into their narrative of sexual misbehavior in the Church. They certainly will not do what I will do now—compare the situation in the seminaries to other venues.

In 2013, Hollaback! commissioned a College Harassment Survey and found that 67 percent of students experienced harassment on campus. In 2006, the American Association of University Women reported that nearly two-thirds of college students experienced sexual harassment at some point during college. In 2018, an online survey by Stop Street Harassment found that 81 percent of women and 43 percent of men said they experienced some form of sexual harassment during their lifetime.

By any measure, conditions in the seminaries have vastly improved.

DILEMMAS FACED BY AMAZON

SYNOD

The Amazon Synod of Bishops took place October 6-27. It generated a lot of controversy, much of it dealing with the prospect of “married men of virtue” in the Amazon region being ordained as priests. That, and much more, was discussed in the synod’s working document.

If there was one issue that posed a real dilemma for the bishops it was this: How to respect the culture of indigenous peoples while at the same time acknowledging inherent deficiencies in it. An even bigger problem was coming to terms with the logical prescriptions for progress and the anti-modernist vision of the working document on this subject.

Cardinal Jorge Urosa Savino notes the working document “seems to consider the Indians or original peoples and culture as the whole of the Amazonian population, not taking into account the urban and *criollas* (white and mixed-race) population of cities and towns.”

Similarly, it should be noted that there has never been an “Amazonian society.” What exists in the hinterlands of Brazil, and nearby territories, are mostly tribes. It is these tribal peoples that the working document addressed.

Who are these people? Are they primitive, at least by our Western standards? The working document finds the terms “savages” and “primitive” to be an example of “contempt for the people and customs of the Amazon territory.” To be sure, racists have seized on such terms as a way to denigrate the people in this part of the world, but is it accurate to say that such terminology is inherently racist?

This question must be raised because many social scientists would find fault with such a dismissive attitude. No anthropologist did more to challenge the conventional wisdom of the noble savage—in the Amazon region—than Napoleon

Chagnon. His book, *Yanomami: The Fierce People*, detailed how incredibly violent these Indians were. "Yanomami life was one of 'incessant warfare,'" he said. In fact, "men who killed were more highly esteemed and had more wives and children than men who did not."

Chagnon to the contrary, the working document offered a romanticized portrait of the indigenous people of the Amazon region. Consider the following excerpts.

- "A contemplative, attentive and respectful look at their brothers and sisters, and also at nature—the brother tree, the sister flower, the sisters birds, the brothers fish, and even the smallest sisters like ants, larvae, fungi or insects—allows the Amazonian communities to discover how everything is connected..."
- "The care of life [that they exhibit] is opposed to the throwaway culture, to the culture of exploitation, oppression and lying." (Our italic.)
- "Everything is shared; private spaces, so typical of modernity, are minimal."
- "The Amazon cosmovision and the Christian worldview are both in crisis due to the imposition of mercantilism, secularization, the throwaway culture, and idolatry of money."
- "The original peoples of the Amazon have much to teach us."
- The "agents of the techno-economic model" are denounced, as are "infrastructural mega-projects like hydroelectric dams and international highways."

According to this portrait, it would be better for these people not to adopt the ways of the developed nations. Yet even the authors of the working document call attention to the backward ways of the people in this region. "Inefficiency of health/sanitation services" are noted. There is also a "Lack of quality in education and dropping out of school." The public authorities are cited for responding slowly to developing "infrastructure and the promotion of employment."

How can the well being of the indigenous peoples be improved if modern methods are rejected? Take health care. This is how current conditions are described in the working document. "Health care of the inhabitants involves detailed knowledge of medicinal plants and other traditional elements that are part of the healing process."

Should such quaint practices be encouraged or would it be more humane to introduce them to modern medicine? Can sanitation services be expected to improve, and can infrastructure be built, if there is an animus to the "techno-economic model" and "international highways"? No matter, it seems the authors of the working document have made up their minds.

They rail against buying medicine from pharmaceutical companies, complaining about the "patenting of drugs and overpricing." What to do? "Therefore, it is proposed to value traditional medicine, the wisdom of the elders and indigenous rituals, and at the same time to facilitate access to medicines that cure new diseases."

If the contradictions evident in this observation have to be explained, then the situation is hopeless.

It is striking to read some of the suggestions by well-educated persons from the West. "Reject alliance with the dominant culture and with political and economic power in order to promote the cultures and rights of indigenous people, of the poor and of the territory."

If that is what these people want, then so be it. But it must be noted that this is ineluctably a recipe for stagnation and poverty. Moreover, it is a prescription that the authors have clearly rejected for themselves.

The Holy Father will ultimately decide what recommendations he will accept from this consultative body. Time will tell.

LOUSY PIECE OF JOURNALISM FROM CRUX

Christopher White, a Crux correspondent, can't even spell Bill Donohue's name right, but his more serious delinquencies entail what he wrote about him in a news story on the Amazon synod.

He correctly says that Donohue pointed out that the bishops have a dilemma on their hands. They must decide "how to respect the culture of indigenous peoples while at the same time acknowledging inherent deficiencies in it." If the next sentence sounds like an odd transition, it's because it is. "In short, there is nothing noble about savages—quite the opposite."

In fact, that sentence appears five paragraphs later, after Donohue quoted from the esteemed anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon about what he described as the savagery of an Indian tribe, the Yanomami, from the Amazon region. But the reader would never know this by reading what White said.

So why would White jump to this sentence, taking it completely out of context? So he could tee it up for this gem: "Donahue's [sic] language characterizing the 'deficiencies' in indigenous culture was slammed by a number of Catholic theologians and commentators as insensitive or tinged with racism."

The deficiencies Donohue made reference to were not something of his imagination: He quoted what the authors of the working document on the Amazon synod said. Besides deficiencies in medical care and education, they wrote about the "inefficiency of health/sanitation services." That's their language. Does this make them insensitive or racists as well?

One more thing. Who are these theologians and commentators who “slammed” Donohue? Why doesn’t White say who they are? Why haven’t they surfaced? Are they cowards?

Crux has done some very fine work under the auspices of John Allen. But this piece is not of that vintage—it is a lousy piece of journalism.

DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES FAIL THE RELIGION TEST

In a recent televised debate, Democratic candidates for president addressed the subject of religious liberty. Their positions were troubling.

Julian Castro is so opposed to religious exemptions that he said that if he is elected, his “first order of business on January 20, 2021” would be to roll back religious exemptions that collide with the rights of homosexuals and transgender persons. He did not give one example where he would honor the First Amendment right to the free exercise of religion over the *nowhere mentioned constitutional rights* of homosexuals and transgender persons.

Joe Biden thought he was flashing his “tolerant” Catholic credentials when he boasted that Ireland was the first nation to change its constitution to allow two people of the same sex to marry. He failed to note the triumph of radical secularism in Ireland and the sharp decline of the Catholic Church.

Pete Buttigieg’s enthusiasm for gay rights led him to take another dishonest shot at Vice President Mike Pence (who was governor of Indiana when Buttigieg was mayor of South Bend).

He opined that his marriage to another man moved him “closer to God.” He then said, “And I wish the VP could understand that.”

This lie is right out of the gay rights playbook. The goal is to portray anyone who disagrees with gay marriage as a bigot. It is pure demagoguery, and Buttigieg is a master of it.

In 2015, three years after becoming mayor, Buttigieg “came out,” admitting publicly that he is a homosexual. Here is what Pence said at the time. “I hold Mayor Buttigieg in the highest personal regard. I see him as a dedicated public servant and a patriot.” Moreover, when the two of them met for the first time, Buttigieg said he found Pence to be “affable, even gentle.” In other words, it is not Pence who changed—it is Buttigieg. He is now lying about Pence so he can claim victim status.

Not only has Pence never once questioned Buttigieg’s relationship with God, he has unequivocally said that “If I saw a restaurant owner refuse to serve a gay couple, I wouldn’t eat there anymore.” Not exactly the kind of thing we would expect from a gay basher.

Elizabeth Warren told the audience how she believes in the “preciousness of each and every life.” This is not true. If it were true, then why did she vote against a law that would make it a federal crime for a doctor not to attend to infants born alive due to a botched abortion? Her failure to do so allows infanticide to exist with impunity.

When Cory Booker was asked if churches should lose their tax-exempt status if they don’t support the gay rights agenda, he did not commit himself, though he was clearly not in the religion-friendly camp.

Beto O’Rourke did commit himself: He said that if he is president, there would be “no tax break” for any institution that did not ascribe to the gay rights agenda.

None of the candidates was asked why religious exemptions even exist, or which ones they would keep.

There are some voices in the Democratic Party that freely admit how dangerously secular the Party has grown. Their effort to bring sanity to their Party is commendable. But it is quite clear that they have failed.

USA TODAY SLAMS CHURCH FOR DEFENDING ITSELF

Marisa Kwiatkowski is a young reporter for USA TODAY. Her colleague, John Kelly, is a middle-age reporter. For the sake of argument, let's say they are both much older, in their late sixties. Let's also imagine that they have been accused of sexual misconduct by a cub reporter when they were in their early thirties.

Nothing can be done about their alleged misconduct because the accuser came forward only yesterday, and the claim is beyond the statute of limitations. But a new law is being considered that would suspend the statute of limitations for one year, allowing old cases to be adjudicated. The law, however, only applies to those who work in journalism. If someone was molested by a priest or a rabbi, the new law would not apply.

What would Marisa and John have to say about that? Would they protest, arguing that the law was unjust because it singled out journalists? What if they enlisted the support of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) and it agreed to tap an army of lawyers to fight the bill—wouldn't they feel that was justified? And how would they react if their critics called them every name in the book, branding them and the SPJ

“criminals” for skirting punishment for their outrageous behavior?

We all know what they would say. Which is why they are such phonies.

The authors have done to the clergy and the Catholic Church what they would find despicable if done to them and their profession.

According to the logic outlined in their 3700-word story, it is callous, if not cruel, for bishops to fight legislation that singles out the Catholic Church under a law that suspends the statute of limitations in cases of sexual abuse. The bishops are supposed to keep their mouths shut, never alerting the faithful to the fact that the law has zero application to those who work outside the Catholic Church.

Obviously, the Catholic Church pushes back against lawmakers who never have the guts to include public school employees—teachers who rape their students—in such legislation. Should it be the only institution in the nation not to defend itself against unjust legislation?

We at the Catholic League have fought hard for decades trying to establish a level playing field, and we apologize to no one for doing so. Guess what happens when we succeed and the public schools are covered? The public school establishment rolls out its big-time lawyers to fight it.

The authors also find it unjust that the Catholic Church complains about adjudicating old cases. Do they have any idea why we have statutes of limitation on the books? Have they ever heard of due process? How can it reasonably be determined if the accused is guilty when the alleged offense took place decades ago?

The reporters think they’ve hit gold when they “ran 10 of the church’s opposition statements—including news releases and

letters to government officials and to parishioners—through a language-processing algorithm, searching for commonalities.” Guess what their high-tech gimmick found? The Church frequently says that the unjust legislation they are fighting against is “unjust.” The sophistry of the reporters is stunning.

The story gets even sillier when we read about some alleged victim who “did not remember being the victim of abuse as a child...until she was 40.” Really? And why was that? If the reporters were on their game, they would know what a discredited concept the notion of repressed memory is. The scientific literature is near unanimous in concluding that the more heinous the offense, *the less likely it is not to be remembered*.

What makes this USA TODAY story so astonishing is its failure to mention the outstanding report done by USA TODAY in December 2016: it exposed what is going on in the public schools. The title of the report says it all. “Teachers Who Sexually Abuse Students Still Find Classroom Jobs: Despite Decades of Scandals, America’s Schools Still Hide Actions Of Dangerous Educators.”

The story is riveting. “A year-long USA TODAY Network investigation found that education officials put children in harm’s way by covering up evidence of abuse, keeping allegations secret and making it easy for abusive teachers to find jobs elsewhere.” It correctly noted that Congress passed a law in 2015 “requiring states to ban school districts from secretly passing problem teachers to other jurisdictions or face losing federal funds.” And what happened? “But 45 states have not instituted a ban.”

Why didn’t the authors of the USA TODAY story draw on this study? Wouldn’t that have put the issue in context? Or would that have gotten in the way of their narrative?

The Catholic Church has made enormous strides in combating sexual abuse. Indeed, as we have said many times before, there is no institution today, secular or religious, *that has less of a problem with sexual misconduct than the Catholic Church*. But one would never know this by reading this USA TODAY story.

AP STUDY OF ACCUSED PRIESTS DESERVES AN “F”

The Associated Press (AP) study of former priests who were credibly accused of sexual misconduct reeks of duplicity, and worse.

The nine-month investigation found nearly 1,700 “priests and other clergy members that the Roman Catholic Church considers credibly accused of child sexual abuse are living under the radar with little or no supervision from religious authorities or law enforcement...”

It would be more accurate to refer to the victims as minors, not children, since most of them were adolescents (e.g., victims of homosexuality, not pedophilia).

The thrust of the story is that once an accused priest is no longer in ministry, in many cases the Church no longer polices him. This is hardly unique: The AP reporters fail to mention a single institution in the nation, secular or religious, that monitors every former employee who has been accused of sexual misconduct. Importantly, this certainly includes the profession of journalism. But that is where the similarities end.

Unlike the public schools, for example, background checks for

all new employees in the Catholic Church are routine. Therefore, the likelihood of the Church employing an accused sex offender is rare. This is not true elsewhere, especially in the public schools. And while in the last century, some bishops moved accused priests to another parish—this is no longer the case—this is still the norm in the public schools. How do we know? Because of studies done by the AP and USA TODAY.

In 2007, AP published a series of articles about sexual offenses in the public schools. It found that between 2001-2005, 2,570 educators had their teaching credentials revoked because of sexual misconduct. It detailed 1,801 cases of abuse: more than 80 percent of the victims were students, and most of the offenders were public school teachers.

What happened to them? “Most of the abuse never gets reported.” What about those who did not get their licenses revoked? They are the “mobile molesters,” teachers sent to another school or district, a practice so widespread that it’s called “passing the trash.”

In 2016, USA TODAY published its own series on abuse in the public schools. It found that “passing the trash” was still the norm: abusive teachers were able to move to new teaching jobs, or to other employment working with youth.

In other words, the molesting teachers not only were not monitored once they left the school, they found teaching jobs elsewhere.

Some might ask, “Haven’t some accused priests found employment as public school teachers, and in other professions, including jobs working with young people?” They have. Indeed, the AP story on the Church cites examples of this practice.

But why is this the fault of the Catholic Church? Why is this not the fault of the public school establishment, and other professions, for not doing a background check? Responsible

parents do a background check on prospective baby sitters. What's wrong with public school officials?

The USA TODAY report also found that most states (45 of them) refused to abide by a 2015 federal law requiring states to ban secret termination agreements, thus allowing accused molesting teachers to find another job without a problem. As important as anything, the study found that the federal government still "does not maintain a database of teachers who have sexually molested children." By contrast, the Catholic Church keeps a record on accused priests.

The AP public school study touched on this issue as well. Here is an excerpt from the first of three stories.

"Too often problem teachers are allowed to leave quietly. That can mean future abuse for another student and another school district." It offered a quote from Charol Shakeshaft, one of the nation's top experts on this subject. "They might deal with it internally," she said, "suspending the person or having the person move on. So their license is never investigated."

The story continued. "Laws in several states require that even an allegation of sexual misconduct be reported to the state departments that oversee teacher licenses. But there's no consistent enforcement, so such laws are easy to ignore." Shakeshaft attributes this outcome to school officials feeling embarrassed, wanting to avoid "the fallout from going up against a popular teacher."

The AP story on the Catholic Church really starts to overheat when it says that "Priests and other church employees being listed on sex offender registries at all is a rarity." Have the reporters lost their mind? These priests have been accused—they have not been found guilty!

How could they make such an irresponsible comment? There are only two plausible answers: their hatred of the Catholic

Church is off the charts, or they are just plain stupid. *No accused person is registered as a sex offender unless he has been convicted.* On this score alone, the AP study on the Church deserves an “F.”

Is Charlie Rose a registered sex offender? How about Harvey Weinstein? Hundreds of such examples could be cited.

If the AP reporters focused their sights on the public schools, or on those in the media and Hollywood, they would have a whole lot more to chew on than zeroing in on the Catholic Church. But that wouldn't win the applause of their colleagues. It's so much more fun to nail an easy target, even if that target looks good by comparison with others.

Shame on the AP for playing politics with such a serious issue.

BILL BARR'S CRITICS LOOK FOOLISH

Attorney General Bill Barr gave an historically accurate and sociologically sound presentation at Notre Dame Law School on October 11 that has been the source of much chatter by his critics. His topic was the militant secularist assault on religious liberty. If anyone has any doubts about whether this exists, let him read the Catholic League website. The points he made were astute.

Every society is conditioned on a modicum of order, lest it devolve into anarchy. In despotic regimes, order is imposed by the state. In democratic regimes, it relies on self-restraint. What is the source of self-restraint? Nothing harnesses the

passions better than the Judeo-Christian ethos. When that is endangered, liberty loses.

Barr is rightfully concerned about the attacks on our religious heritage, leaving us vulnerable to social discord. His critics, who are sociologically illiterate, seem to think that secularism can take the place of our Judeo-Christian tradition. They are wrong. Secularism values individualism and appeals to our base appetites.

What upsets Barr's critics more than anything are his comments on the origins of today's attack on religion. "This is not decay. It is organized destruction."

To *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman, this is "the language of witch hunts and pogroms." Catherine Rampell at the *Washington Post* was just as alarmed, saying his remarks are "a tacit endorsement of theocracy." *Mother Jones* reported that his speech "shocked legal experts." Mary Papenfuss at Huffington Post said his address "revealed how deeply the top lawman in the nation is tied to his Catholicism."

Krugman's scary scenario of witch hunts and pogroms makes him sound delusional. Similarly, Rampell's fear that Barr wants a theocracy is crazy talk. Any "legal expert" who is shocked to learn about the sociological role of religion in a free society is badly educated. Barr's Catholicism, naturally, upsets the tolerant ones; they can't get over it.

Barr's critics do not believe there is any organized effort to attack our religious roots. Ironically, two of his critics—American Atheists and Freedom From Religion Foundation—are organized to do just that. This shows how clueless Barr's critics are.

If these savants had it their way, they would censor Barr. "Consider for a moment how inappropriate it is for Barr, of all people, to have given such a speech," writes Krugman. "The Constitution guarantees freedom of religion; the nation's

chief enforcement officer has no business denouncing those who exercise that freedom by choosing not to endorse any religion.”

The same part of the Constitution cited by Krugman guarantees freedom of speech. Yes, that even allows the Attorney General of the United States to defend religious liberty—just as it allows economists like Krugman to criticize him.

Bill Barr gave a courageous and much-needed statement on the current state of religious liberty. It sounded like it was taken right out of the Catholic League playbook.