

RELIGION SCARES THE NEW REPUBLIC

In a recent edition of *The New Republic* magazine, there was an article by Damon Linker titled "A Mormon in the White House." Appearing around the same time there was a piece in the *Wall Street Journal* about the execution of Saddam Hussein. The article was written by Marty Peretz, editor-in-chief of *The New Republic*. The two articles read together provide great insight into the way this influential journal of opinion thinks about religion.

Damon Linker doesn't want Mitt Romney to be president, and that's because Romney is purportedly pro-life and opposed to gay marriage. Moreover, Romney's religion, Mormonism, has too many certitudes for Linker to swallow. This is not surprising given Linker's nervousness about Roman Catholicism: he recently attempted to undermine the credibility of Father Richard John Neuhaus (for whom he once worked).

What accounts for Linker's fury? He is mad at Neuhaus because the New York priest proudly proclaims his religion to be the one, true faith. Now it is Romney who has shaken Linker. Nice to know, too, that he decided to publish his latest hit job in the pages of a magazine not known for its kindness to Catholicism. Most Americans agree to disagree about matters religious, but this is obviously virgin territory for Linker; he would rather cast aspersions.

In his newspaper article, Peretz disagreed with Vatican official Cardinal Renato Martino, who objected to the execution of Saddam. That's fine, but what was troubling was his substitution of derision for reason. He derided Martino's comment that we must protect life from "conception until natural death," saying, "are we supposed to imagine that Saddam is an innocent unborn fetus in his mother's womb?"

Does this mean that Peretz has all of a sudden become pro-life? Not a chance. He then asked, "Does Cardinal Martino have no conception of the dimension of the tyrant's crimes?" To which it must be asked: Does Peretz have no conception of what a principled position entails? He further labeled Martino's remarks "pabulum," noting his 16 years working at the U.N. "Sixteen years," Peretz said, "poor man, no wonder, he's a little overwrought and also disingenuous."

Poor Marty—he's been at *The New Republic* twice as long as Martino's stint at the U.N. Maybe this could be what accounts for his funk.

In a statement that we released to the media, we said "*The New Republic* is scared to death about religion, save, of course, for religion lite. This latest twin shot shows how unnerved it has become. Ironically, for a magazine worried about certitude, it speaks with the most infallible voice this side of the academy."