

SAVAGING CARDINAL BURKE

Bill Donohue comments on a blog piece in the *Washington Post*:

Raymond Cardinal Burke is a brilliant defender of orthodoxy, one who has bumped heads with the pope. Which man is right is not for the Catholic League to say. But when either man is being unfairly maligned, it beckons a response.

Emma-Kate Symons is not content to side with the pope—she is bent on savaging Cardinal Burke. Not able to sustain a rational argument, she descends to vitriol.

She calls Burke a “renegade cleric” and a “rebel prince of the church” who seeks to “legitimize extremist forces that want to bring down Western liberal democracy.” He also works with a “conservative wing that wants to reassert white Christian dominance.” She did not say if he belongs to the Klan.

Burke is also charged with presiding over a “secretive society headquartered in Rome.” It’s called the Knights of Malta! He is also accused of presiding over “a far-right, neo-fascist-normalizing cheer squad out of the Holy See.” She did not say if they wear Brown Shirts.

Symons, acting like a good liberal, wants Burke silenced. She wants him kicked out of the Knights of Malta—it does not matter to her that it is a sovereign entity—and punished for enabling “extremism and neo-fascism” in the Catholic Church.

This kind of insane discourse is usually found on some alt-left blog site, the creation of an unemployed blogger writing on his laptop at Starbucks. That the *Washington Post* would provide a home for this trash tells us how low its standards have fallen.

TRUMP RIPPED FOR RELIGION-FRIENDLY STANCE

Bill Donohue comments on a piece by Claire Markham of the Center for American Progress distorting President Trump's commitment to religious liberty:

Neither President Donald Trump, nor his competitor, Hillary Clinton, are known for their devoutness, but unlike the loser, Trump is a reliable friend to people of faith. That is exactly why he is coming under fire from militant secularists. The latest hit job comes courtesy of the Center for American Progress.

John Podesta founded the organization and George Soros funds it. They make quite a pair. In the Wikileaks email exchanges, Podesta was caught bragging about his efforts to subvert the Catholic Church. Soros, as anyone who has looked at the Catholic League's website knows, has a long record of lavishly giving to anti-Catholic groups. So it is hardly surprising that one of their own, [Claire Markham](#), would rip Trump for being religion-friendly.

Markham's first salvo is so obtuse that it makes one wonder how low the hiring bar has fallen at the Center for American Progress. She accuses the Trump administration of wanting to "redefine religious liberty to only people who share its vision of faith." Vision of faith? No one save a dunce speaks that way. The administration has no "vision of faith," but it is committed to the defense of religious liberty, something Podesta and Soros have worked to undermine.

Repeating the lie that is so popular among Trump's critics, Markham decries his "Muslim ban." But there is no ban—only

select Muslim-run nations with a history of sponsoring terrorism (as determined by the Obama administration) are under a temporary ban.

Markham makes a big deal out of the White House statement on the Holocaust that did not specifically mention Jews. This political attack reflects the desire to tag Trump with being unfriendly to every religion, save Christianity. Ironically, it is not Trump or his staff who has been tagged for being an anti-Semite—it is [employees at the Center for American Progress](#).

Trump was also criticized for his desire to repeal the Johnson Amendment, the IRS rule that limits tax-exempt organizations, such as churches, from involvement in the political process. While there are legitimate grounds to question what a repeal might mean, the issue raised by Markham about a “dark money loophole for political donations” is pure demagoguery. Has anyone at the Podesta-Soros organization complained how this has affected the teachers unions and the Democratic Party?

What upsets Markham most is what Trump might do: He might issue an executive order protecting religious liberty. The draft that has circulated is magnificent, notwithstanding the need to do some tweaking. It clearly represents a commitment to expand the reach of religious rights, insulating religious individuals and institutions from being encroached upon by government. Astonishingly, Markham criticizes the draft for its “narrow view of religious liberty.” That’s Orwellian doublespeak. It is precisely because it has a broad view that she is going ballistic.

Trump’s dedication to religious liberty stands in stark relief to the assault on this First Amendment right by the Obama administration. Religious leaders have a moral obligation to support him in these efforts.

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PARANOIA GRIPS ESQUIRE'S PIERCE

Bill Donohue comments on an online piece by Charles P. Pierce:

At one time I used to subscribe to *Esquire*. It was a well written, often provocative and entertaining magazine, one that covered a wide range of subjects. But it lost its way in recent years, evolving into a series of screeds. Its nuttiest writer is Charles P. Pierce, a man whose fondness for all matters Catholic is, well, not so kind.

Pierce is paranoid about Stephen K. Bannon, President Trump's strategist and confidant. He is also paranoid about Cardinal Raymond Burke, a loyal son of the Catholic Church. He calls Bannon a "political thug," and Burke a "theological thug."

Pierce began his day today, as I did, reading a front-page story in the *New York Times* about these two Catholics. I was unimpressed. I told the staff it was not a news story, much less a front-page one; it read like an op-ed. The author of this misplaced hit job is Jason Horowitz, a reporter who is capable of doing better. No matter, it fed the paranoia of Pierce, giving him much to chew on.

Bannon is a lay Catholic who shares the concerns of many regarding the secularization of the West and the threat posed by radical Islam. Burke is a courageous defender of the faith, one who has bumped heads with the Vatican, including Pope Francis. Yes, they are both orthodox and determined men, but neither is a threat to democracy or the Catholic Church.

Pierce wrote a piece right after the election branding Bannon as Trump's David Duke. Just last week he repeated his charge that Bannon is a white supremacist. Now he says he is taking over the world. I do not exaggerate.

Here is what Pierce wrote about Bannon today. "He wants to establish himself as the head of a new, worldwide authoritarian elite that will reach into every institution and will demolish any of those institutions that stand in the way of what he wants." I knew Bannon was tough, but not this tough.

As for Burke, Pierce says he is on the verge of creating "an army" to force his way into power, one who commands a mean sword. Mean stuff.

Pierce has much competition these days, but for my money no one merits the title Paranoid-in-Chief more than he does.

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DeVOS IS A GODSEND TO POOR BLACKS

Bill Donohue comments on the tie-breaking vote of Vice President Mike Pence confirming Betsy DeVos as the new secretary of education:

Betsy DeVos proved to be victorious despite the mass phone calls that were well orchestrated against her.

It would be instructive to learn how many poor blacks flooded the phone lines demanding that they not be given the same choice afforded rich people, namely the right to send their

children to a private school. It would be astonishing if even one did so.

If the Ku Klux Klan were to devise a plan to keep poor blacks in poverty, they could do no better than to lead the fight against school choice. But they don't have to lift a finger—the teachers unions and the education establishment are doing the job for them.

While the motivations may be different, the outcome is the same: All of these people have one thing in common—keeping poor blacks in their place. Betsy DeVos hopes to break their stranglehold, which is why she is so feared.

Congratulations to Secretary DeVos and Vice President Pence.

SNAP FOUNDER QUILTS IN DISGRACE

Bill Donohue comments on the resignation of the founder and president of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), Barbara Blaine:

Blaine announced her resignation over the weekend. She quit in disgrace, as did the executive director, David Clohessy, who packed it in less than two weeks ago.

Both Clohessy and Blaine tried to put a happy face on their departure—which effectively kills SNAP—but no one believes them. Clohessy said his decision had nothing to do with the devastating lawsuit brought against SNAP by a former employee, Gretchen Rachel Hammond. Blaine echoed the same line, saying the lawsuit “had absolutely no bearing on my leaving.”

Clohessy listed “fatigue” as his reason for quitting, saying he wanted to do something “less stressful.” But what could be less stressful than rolling out of bed and answering the phone? After all, he didn’t report to work in Chicago, the venue of SNAP’s office; he elected to stay at home in St. Louis.

Speaking from the same playbook, Blaine said she left because “I need a break.” A break from what? Telling employees to ignore callers asking for help? That’s what Hammond alleges.

Clohessy and Blaine have shamelessly attacked the Catholic Church for decades, posing as crusaders for justice. All of this and more can be found on the Catholic League website: we have documented the lies and machinations of SNAP for a long time, though the mainstream media have been reluctant to acknowledge it.

The great irony is that after working so incestuously with several unseemly lawyers, not one of them has volunteered to represent SNAP. Barbara Dorris, who now calls herself the managing director, said they are looking for financial assistance and are “seeking pro-bono legal help.”

Financial assistance? They pressured victims to part with some of their settlement money, so why not use those funds? Or has it been spent on traveling and entertainment? The biggest irony is being left high and dry by their lawyer buddies: one can hardly blame them—they know SNAP is finished, so they have no reason to help.

It is so gratifying to see that justice is finally being done. And this isn’t over—they still have to face the music in court.

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TRUMP BREAKS WITH DEMOCRATS ON RELIGION

Bill Donohue comments on President Trump's address at today's National Prayer Breakfast:

The most significant line in President Trump's speech spoke about the right of Americans to "practice their beliefs without fear of hostility or fear of violence."

He did not say we are entitled to our beliefs—no one can stop us from believing what we want anyway—he said we have a right to *practice* them. Thus did he separate himself from the language of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, both of whom spoke about ensuring our "freedom to worship."

That term suggests an insular right—the right to pray in church—and not the kind of full-throated exercise of religion as favored by the term "freedom of religion."

Trump's willingness to underscore our right to practice our religion rightly suggests that religious liberty is undermined if it does not entail our right to publicly act on it.

We [predicted](#) that Trump would be religion-friendly. He's now making good on it.

BEYONCE PHOTO SPARKS CONTROVERSY

Bill Donohue comments on a photo of a pregnant Beyoncé that has ignited controversy:

It is not certain what Beyoncé had in mind when she posed pregnant, half naked, draped with a veil, amidst a backdrop of roses. Some saw Christian imagery in the Instagrammed picture. One thing is for sure: the *New York Post* did.

The photo appears on the front page of today's *New York Post*, with the headline, "BEYMACULATE CONCEPTION: Mother of God! Singer's Pregnant with Twins."

Turning to the story on p. 5, the headline reads, "A-BEY MARIA! SHE IS HAVING TWINS." Below is the same photo of the pregnant Beyoncé on one side, and an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the other.

Commenting on the Beyoncé photo, the story says, "it's hardly the Annunciation—despite the photo's Botticelli-worthy composition."

Not knowing what Beyoncé had in mind, it's hard to take her to task for this photo (it is tasteless for sure), though it wouldn't be the first time a Hollywood celebrity insulted Christians. But there is no uncertainty about the *New York Post*'s intention: It took the opportunity to play fast and loose with Christian iconography, thus devaluing a sacred symbol.

It does not speak well for the *New York Post* to unnecessarily provoke Christians with this cheap stunt. Whatever happened to ethics in journalism?

Contact NY Post chief editor, Stephen Lynch: slynch@nypost.com

GORSUCH IS A GREAT PICK

Bill Donohue comments on Judge Neil Gorsuch, selected by President Trump to take Judge Antonin Scalia's place on the Supreme Court:

The Catholic League has a narrow focus when it comes to prospective U.S. Supreme Court judges.

We want someone who is intellectually admired by his colleagues, a person who has a well developed jurisprudential philosophy. We want someone who resists imputing his own political preferences when ruling on constitutional cases, and who instead interprets the law the way the Framers intended it to be understood.

Regarding the issues, we want someone who puts a premium on our two most important rights: the right to life, from fertilization to natural death, and religious liberty for all.

Judge Neil Gorsuch fits that description. He has a towering intellectual reputation, having studied at Columbia, Harvard, and Oxford. He is not an ideologue bent on affirming his politics in law. He is a judge who understands the dangers that assisted suicide and euthanasia pose to the most vulnerable members of society. He is a man who values religious liberty, holding that conscience rights are paramount.

President Trump has selected an incredibly gifted person for the Supreme Court. The Senate deserves to give him a fair hearing, acting without delay.