

TRUMP RIPPED FOR RELIGION-FRIENDLY STANCE

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 recently came 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 has accused 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 made a big deal out of the White House statement on the Holocaust that did not specifically mention Jews. This

political attack has reflected 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 upset 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. Astonish-ingly, Markham criticized the draft for its “narrow view of religious liberty.” That’s Orwellian doublespeak. It is precisely because it has a broad view that she went 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.

MACY'S UPDATE

Our feud with Macy's may be coming to an end.

Members recall that last year we led a campaign against the mega-department store chain for its firing of a Catholic Hispanic senior store detective, Javier Chavez, merely because he disagreed with the store's policy of allowing cross-dressing men to use the ladies room.

Chavez was made aware of Macy's policy after a transgender person complained when told to leave the ladies room. Even though he agreed to enforce the policy, he was punished by the Macy's thought police for expressing his personal reservations, grounded in his Catholic faith.

How much will be made public regarding this issue has to do with how this is handled by the New York State Division of Human Rights. If the ruling is made part of the public record, we will make an announcement.

No matter what the official outcome is, Macy's has proven to be a brazen bully. We hope our role in making this episode public helps to generate a fair conclusion for Chavez.

HBO'S "THE YOUNG POPE" FLOPS

A new HBO series began January 15, "The Young Pope," and went nowhere. Dumb would be too kind a word to describe it.

We could not resist noting that the series began on a Sunday during the football playoffs. "Most normal men and women will be watching the Packers-Cowboys game on Sunday," said Bill Donohue. He continued, "Owing to the fact that Monday is a

federal holiday, the party goers will have had their fill of beer by the time the game ends around 8:00 p.m. This guarantees that none will tune into HBO's 'The Young Pope' at 9:00 p.m."

Donohue took off the gloves: "This is HBO's first mistake: real men and women watch football and drink beer—they don't get their jollies watching an ideologically driven flick about some tortured pope who has 'power-mad dreams.' But perhaps I am too harsh: the target audience never threw a football, much less watched a game on TV."

The man behind this fictional series is Paolo Sorrentino. Pope Pius XIII's real name, viewers learned, is not Leonard Belardo—it's Lenny Belardo. His hip name corresponds with his habit of chain smoking and drinking diet soda. But the Brooklynite (he is America's first pope) also has a few flaws.

According to TV Guide Magazine, Pope Pius is "cruel, deceptive and a bit of an ass." Variety said he can be "cruel, vindictive, surprisingly compassionate, and justifiably paranoid." Breitbart said the pope comes across as "a lustful (possibly bisexual) narcissist." The Hollywood Reporter called him "arrogant, whimsical and hilariously destructive," a pontiff who "comes across as borderline anti-Christ." Oh, yes, "he personally doesn't believe in God."

Indiewire.com praised Sorrentino for his devilish abilities. "Anyone angry with Lenny is asked to shift their [sic] ire toward the church." Mission accomplished: it's not the tormented pope who is the problem, it's his lousy church.

What does Sorrentino have against the Church? An atheist, he bemoans it's structure. "The Vatican is a state with a vertical power structure." Perhaps this genius can tell us which nation-state has a horizontal power structure.

The pope's advisor, Cardinal Michael Spencer, was played by James Cromwell. The character he played has "completely for-

gott[en] the purpose for which Christ founded the church.” This explains why he played his role so effortlessly.

Cromwell noted that “there are sequences about pedophilia in America,” and “the whole homosexual issue.” This suggests bad editing: there is no need to treat these matters as separate issues—in real life, homosexual priests raped the boys, not pedophiles (sex with prepubescent males account for less than 5 percent of the abuse cases.)

In an interview with the Hollywood Reporter, Cromwell told us how horrible the Catholic Church in America is for opposing abortion. He boasted that abortion is not a divisive issue in Europe. He’s right. There is also little debate there anymore about putting to death the depressed, the handicapped, the sick, and the elderly, increasingly without their consent.

Donohue completed his remarks saying, “So, guys and girls, keep the brews flowing on Sunday, unless, of course, you want to watch a chain-smoking, bit of an ass, borderline anti-Christ, possibly bisexual, cruel, vindictive, paranoid pope who doesn’t believe in God. This should go over big with the Meryl Streep gang.”

We decided not to waste our time commenting on each episode. To do so would have given the series more attention than it deserved.

But we did take note of the way it was received by critics who were not at all offended by the stupid stereotypes it promoted: most of them dubbed it a flop. Just desserts.

DeVOS WILL SHAKE THINGS UP

Betsy DeVos, the new Secretary of Education, is feared by those who are afraid of change, afraid of breaking up the public school monopoly, and afraid of religious schools. She will shake things up, and it is about time.

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. DeVos hopes to break their stranglehold, which is why she is so feared.

The enemies of school choice organized mass phone calls against DeVos, all of which were in vain. It would be instructive to know how many poor blacks flooded the phone lines demanding that they not be given the same opportunity afforded rich people, namely the right to send their children to a private school. It would be astonishing if even one did so.

DeVos was chosen to be the nominee on November 23, and immediately the forces of regression organized against her.

The ACLU immediately went on the offensive warning that “private and parochial schools” would benefit. Such a condition it said, “perverts the bedrock American value of separation of church and state.”

There is a reason the ACLU never mentioned the “bedrock American value” of religious liberty. When it was founded in 1920, it listed every right incorporated in the First Amendment as one of its top ten priorities, save for freedom

of religion. Ever since, it has worked tirelessly against this right, the exception being the religious rights of prisoners, Muslim extremists, and the like.

Also attacking DeVos on the day she was nominated was the Interfaith Alliance. It is so opposed to religious liberty that it has tried to stop the installation of war memorials honoring veterans if they mention God. Its opposition to the Marriage and Religious Freedom Act, which defends marriage between a man and a woman, showed its ideological colors. It has also tried to censor Bill Donohue: in 2010, it joined with other left-wing groups lobbying TV producers never to invite him again.

The third organization to rip DeVos was Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Founded as a virulently anti-Catholic group in the 1940s, it is led by Barry Lynn today. He accused DeVos of mounting a "*crusade* to create school vouchers across the country." Notice his italic. Betsy the Crusader is coming to Washington!

Katherine Stewart, writing in the *New York Times*, agreed with Lynn, citing a comment DeVos made in 2001 saying educational reform is a way to "advance God's kingdom." Terrifying. Had a nominee invoked Satan's kingdom, it would be seen as free speech, if not applauded.

The public school establishment, of course, led the charge. Michael Mulgrew of the United Federation of Teachers warned that school choice would undermine public education in New York City, which is "moving in the right direction." In point of fact, Mayor Bill de Blasio's decision to award failing schools in New York with *more funding* turned out to be a monumental failure. After spending 839 million dollars, almost all these schools failed to meet expected standards.

Lily Eskelsen Garcia, president of the National Education Association, was predictably upset. "Betsy DeVos is not

qualified,” she said, “and even more than unqualified, Betsy DeVos is an actual danger to students—especially our most vulnerable students.” Of course, it is precisely “the most vulnerable students” who stand to benefit the most by giving their parents the same opportunity that Barack and Michelle Obama have had in sending Sasha and Malia to private schools.

Best of all was the argument made by some faculty members at the University of Cincinnati. “DeVos is unqualified.” Why? “DeVos has no relevant credentials in education, no formal training or experience in teaching, and no advanced knowledge of educational research.” That’s her strength: she hasn’t been corrupted by the credentialized class. She knows what works, which is more than can be said about many of those with initials after their name.

If having the right education credentials made for academic success, the United States would be number one in the world in tests of academic achievement. But it is not. Indeed, it is way down the list. It’s time someone who is an outsider to the establishment was given the chance to promote real reforms, including competition among schools.

These activists and educrats are scared to death of allowing parents the right to choose which school to send their children to, knowing full well that they might opt to select a charter school, non-denominational private school, Christian school, Catholic school, or a yeshiva.

Betsy DeVos prevailed over these demagogues. We congratulate her, and Vice President Mike Pence (he broke the 50-50 tie in the Senate), for beating the forces of regression.