

VANCE'S CATHOLICISM UNDER FIRE

It didn't take long. J.D. Vance, Donald Trump's pick to be his vice president, is a convert to Catholicism, and already that is a source of anger among the haters. He is being dubbed an "integralist" and a "Christian nationalist." Our interest has less to do with Vance than it does the nature of attacks on Catholics of a traditional stripe.

Anthea Butler teaches at the University of Pennsylvania and is a regular guest on MSNBC. The religion professor contends that God is "a white racist." She claims Vance is "aligned with what is called Catholic integralism, the belief that Christians can use a 'soft power' approach to exert influence over society." She cites his opposition to killing babies in the womb as one such example of what she means.

Jack Jenkins is the national reporter for the Religion News Service. He also believes Vance is guilty of Catholic "integralism." He is unhappy with Vance for not answering questions about "his own thoughts regarding Catholic integralism."

What is Catholic integralism? That was the title of an article by Steven P. Millies in 2019. It's an old idea, he says, one that seeks "the integration of religious authority and political power."

So who are these "integralists" who want a theocracy? To prove his point he says "Pope Francis remains a head of state today." He is also upset with Catholic writer Sohrab Ahmari for saying we need to "fight the culture war with the aim of defeating the enemy." That makes him an "integralist."

Kevin Augustyn authored an article on this subject for Discourse magazine that is even better. "This ideology is

growing, vibrant and influential, but it is inherently illiberal and dangerous to American democracy.” He says the believers maintain that it is wrong to separate church and state. So who are they? He does not say. He quotes none of them.

He also claims that “some integralists” are committed to a “totalitarian vision that justifies such things as the disenfranchisement of women, Jews, atheists and indeed all non-Catholics; the persecution of heretics and sexual minorities; the kidnapping of secretly baptized children; and the abolition of religious toleration even for other Christians.”

These “integralists” sound like maniacs. So who are they? He does not say. He quotes none of them.

Justin Dyer is executive director of the Civitas Institute and a professor of government at the University of Texas at Austin. He wrote a piece for the *Washington Post* last year on “the logic of integralism” that is precious.

He says Catholic integralists believe in lots of weird things. “Nothing is truly private” and “there is no private life or private conscience.” So who are they? He does not say. He quotes none of them.

These writers would have us believe that this is the way Vance thinks. But no one seems to be able to come up with anything he has said that sustains this charge. In fact, what Vance has said is true and admirable.

“My views on public policy and what the optimal state should look like are pretty aligned with Catholic social teaching. That was one of the things that drew me to the Catholic Church. I saw a real overlap between what I would like to see and what the Catholic Church would like to see.”

If that makes him an “integralist,” we need more of them. We

hasten to add that some of the books Bill Donohue has authored were specifically written to give sustenance to what Vance believes. Guess that makes Donohue an “integralist” as well, though he didn’t know it until now.

Christian nationalism is the big bogeyman for Christian bashers. So we knew someone would charge Vance as being a devotee. The first to do so is a U.S. Senator, Chris Murphy from Connecticut. He says Vance was picked “to help shape this transition away from democratic norms, this transition to a white, patriarchal, Christian-dominated nation.”

So what did Vance say to merit this accusation? He does not say. He quotes nothing he ever said.

So who is Sen. Murphy? He grew up in a congregational church and now admits he rarely goes to church. He blames his children and his schedule. He says he is “not a regular churchgoer these days, in part because of kids. In part because of a busy schedule.”

His “busy schedule” has earned him an “F” lifetime rating on life issues from Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America. His lust for abortion extends to infanticide: he has consistently voted against efforts to protect children who are born alive after failed abortions. Planned Parenthood consistently gives him a rating of 100%. He also earned a 100% rating from the Human Rights Campaign, the big anti-science and anti-women LGBT group.

As we said at the beginning, these attacks are not merely aimed at Vance—they are aimed at all traditional Catholics. These haters want to demonize us and drive us out of the public square. But they are in over their heads—our side is growing and getting bolder. We will make sure of that.