

Foolish Lady Bishop Vs. Trump

By Bruce Bawer

Today fewer than one percent of Americans belong to the Episcopal Church, the U.S. branch of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Nonetheless, although the Constitution forbids any establishment of religion, the Episcopal Church has always functioned as something of a quasi-established church in the United States, in large part because its mother church, the Church of England, was (and is) the established church in our mother country.



In the early years of American independence, membership in the Episcopal Church was a great deal more common than it is now. Presidents Washington, Madison, and Monroe were Episcopalians (Adams was a Unitarian, Jefferson a Deist), as were about three-quarters of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. After Washington's first inauguration at Federal Hall in New York, which was then the nation's capital, the entire inaugural party made its way to St. Paul's Chapel at

Broadway and Fulton Street for a worship service conducted by the Episcopal bishop of New York.

Built over a period of 83 years, from 1907 to 1990, the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., is a cathedral of the Episcopal Church, and plays a key ceremonial role for the nation's leaders. Even though Jimmy Carter was (famously) a Baptist, his state funeral on January 9 was held there. Eleven days later, on the morning of the inauguration, Donald and Melania Trump attended a service at St. John's Church, which is across Lafayette Square from the White House and which is also an Episcopal church, known as the "Church of Presidents."

And on the day after the inauguration, the Trumps and Vances attended a special prayer service at the National Cathedral. It was there that the Episcopal Bishop of Washington, a woman named Marian Edgar Budde who looks like a 21st-century female Episcopal priest from Central Casting – slim, short-haired, smug – delivered what was apparently supposed to be a homily. Anyone who's familiar with the Episcopal Church today wouldn't have been terribly surprised by it. It was nakedly political – a public scolding of Trump for his (and the voters') position on two of the most urgent issues of the day.

The first was transgenderism. "In the name of our God," Budde [preached](#) at Trump, "I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our county who are scared now. There are gay, lesbian, and transgender children...who fear for their lives." OK, hold on there for a moment. First of all, gays and lesbians of whatever age have nothing whatsoever to fear from Trump. He's the first president ever to enter office as a full supporter of same-sex marriage. Among the gays and lesbians whom he's named to his new administration are Scott Bessent (treasury secretary), Ric Grenell (envoy for special missions), Tammy Bruce (State Department spokesperson), Jacob Helberg (undersecretary of state), Bill White (ambassador to Belgium), and Art Fisher (ambassador to Austria).

(Of course, the difference between Trump and Biden is that Biden picked people *because* they were gay, as illustrated by his selection of that knucklehead Pete Buttigieg as transportation secretary; Trump picks people because he thinks they're the best ones for the job, whatever their sexual orientation.)

As for “gay and lesbian...children” – that is, children who, left to their own devices, would likely grow up to be gay and lesbian – if they have anything to fear, it's not Trump; it's the twisted parents, teachers, psychologists, and doctors who tell all too many of those children nowadays that they're *really* members of the opposite sex. Such kids are then quickly set on a path of chemical and surgical transition that will destroy their reproductive capacity, scar them for life, and very likely cause them tormenting psychological and medical damage. In short, the whole trans grift is directly targeted at gays and lesbians. When knee-jerk progressives like Budde speak of “transgender children,” then, they're supporting a colossally dangerous and profoundly antigay lie in the name of brain-dead political correctness.

The bishop's other *cause du jour* was immigration. In what was clearly meant to be taken as a burst of compassionate eloquence, she urged Trump to be kind to “the people who pick our crops and clean our office buildings, who labor in poultry farms and meat-packing plants, who wash the dishes after we eat in restaurants and work the night shifts in hospitals.” As other observers have already pointed out, this way of perceiving immigrants, illegal or otherwise, is breathtakingly condescending – limousine leftism at its purest. (One is reminded of Kelly Osbourne's notorious comment: “If you kick every Latino out of this country, then who is going to be cleaning your toilets, Donald Trump?”) To speak of people – any people – in the way the bishop did is not to lift them up but to pat them on the head like pets.

She went on to say about these menial workers that “they may

not be citizens or have the proper documentation but the majority of immigrants are not criminals.” Maybe not, but a huge number of them are. Under the Biden administration they have been welcomed into the country for the most cynical of political reasons and have been transported, fed, and housed at taxpayer expense. The bishop referred to the children of those illegal immigrants who “fear that their parents will be taken away” by Trump. She made no mention of the huge number of children – nobody knows how many – who’ve been trafficked across the border and who’ve died or disappeared, experiencing God knows what fate. Nor did Budde mention the American citizens, such as Laken Riley, who’ve been killed by illegals. Where were the bishop’s words of compassion for them?

The bishop’s hectoring made headlines. In its wake she gave a self-serving interview to the [harpies](#) on *The View* and [told](#) CNN that her diatribe directed at Trump was a “conversation” with him (odd way to redefine the word “conversation”). Also, a [video](#) of a 2020 TV interview resurfaced. The occasion was a fire that had been set in the nursery of St. John’s Church by “anti-racism” protesters following the death of George Floyd. Incredibly, instead of criticizing the arsonists, Budde defended them, in effect, saying that she sympathized with their outrage over the “long string of violence against black and brown people” by police and “vigilante civilians” – i.e., the familiar left-wing fabrication. In addition, she issued a written statement criticizing President Trump. “The President just used a Bible and one of the churches of my diocese as a backdrop for a message antithetical to the teachings of Jesus and everything that our church stands for,” Budde [complained](#). “To do so, he sanctioned the use of tear gas by police officers in riot gear to clear the church yard.”

As it happens, I’m an Episcopalian. I have Episcopalian ancestors (including clergymen) going back to the Church’s beginnings, but I didn’t join the Church myself until the late 1980s. I did so because I was strongly drawn to traditional

Anglican theology – which I was first exposed to in a serious way by the person I lived with at the time, who worked as a verger at the aforementioned St. Paul’s Cathedral. (Among his duties was to unlock the chapel’s door and front gate in the morning and close them at night with huge, ancient-looking keys that he hung by the door of our apartment.)

Yes, Anglicanism began in an extremely worldly way: the Church of England divorced itself from the papacy because Henry VIII wanted to divorce his first wife and the Pope wouldn’t let him, period. But under Henry’s daughter Elizabeth I, modern Anglicanism began to take shape, and in an impressively modern way. Anglicanism, to put it simply, is a version of Christianity that emphasizes the mystery of faith over the demand that adherents profess to believe a long list of dogmatic statements. It respects authority even as it utterly repudiates the concept of human infallibility. And it rejects Biblical literalism while firmly respecting reason and the individual conscience. It also believes that the act of worship should be beautiful, marked by stirring ritual and magnificent music.

In a time when Europe was torn by armed conflict over recondite details of doctrine between the members of different Christian denominations, Queen Elizabeth I said that she had “no desire to make windows into men’s souls,” and ever since then Anglicanism has been a big tent in which the important thing is not that all the people in the pews have exactly the same take on this or that doctrine or exactly the same understanding of the nature of the spiritual realm, but that they all come together humbly and peacefully to worship their Creator.

Yes, as a gay man, I liked the fact that Episcopal clergy didn’t bang on about the sin of homosexuality. But by the same token I absolutely didn’t want to be celebrated in sermons – to be preached about patronizingly as a poor, woebegone member of a victim group. At the first church I belonged to, the

rector was gay, but he would never have dreamed of mentioning it from the pulpit. That wasn't what we were all there for – not remotely. We weren't there to advertise our sexualities or share the alleged grievances of our identity groups or revel in our differences but to come together in faith, despite our differences, all of us sinful and all of us hoping for redemption.

To be sure, even at that time there were Episcopal churches in which the acceptance of gay parishioners had tipped over into celebration of their sexual orientation. This phenomenon made me uneasy at the time, although it could at least be defended as an effort to provide succor and sanctuary to people who were, back then, still subject to public abuse and discrimination. But there's no longer any excuse for it. Being gay in America today is pretty much a non-issue, yet the Episcopal Church has become increasingly fixated on the subject; the whole thing has long since reached the point of absurdity. When I left the U.S. in 1998 I was already drifting away, rather wistfully, from Episcopalianism; in 1999 I settled in a country where there's exactly one Episcopal church, which I've walked past a hundred times but never set foot in.

Since then I've watched from afar, with great sadness, as the Episcopal Church has become less and less legitimately Anglican and more and more a place where people gather to engage with one another in insipid left-wing virtue signaling; the ranks of its bishops are filled with people like Budde for whom the only real gospel is the current Democratic Party line. What is deeply foolish about this woman is that she doesn't seem to grasp that if the Episcopal Church has long had a role as America's quasi-established church, it's because historically it *has* been a big tent, where presidents who were Baptists or Presbyterians or Catholics could participate in services without being offended by the hymns, the readings, the sermons, or the rituals. By pulling that stupid stunt on

the Trumps and Vances, Budde took a huge risk. I wouldn't blame Trump, who's made so many momentous decisions since taking office again, if he ordered that henceforth all religious services involving government leaders take place at houses of worship affiliated with denominations *other* than the Episcopal Church. If such a divorce between the federal government and the Episcopal Church ends up being Budde's major legacy, it'll mark a sad end to a 250-year period during which the Episcopal Church, despite its tiny numbers, served as a place where not only all Christians but all people of faith, as well as non-believers, could come together as Americans to recognize that, however we might define it, there's something mysterious up there that's bigger than all of us.

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