

'How Can This Happen in America in 2019?'

This past week, Lois Romano, editor of *The Washington Post* Live and senior writer for Politico, tweeted "How can this happen in America in 2019?"

What was the subject of her incredulity?

Was it the mindless acceptance of socialism now embraced by nearly 50 percent of our country's younger citizens? Was it our culture's lost concern for due process and the presumption of innocence until proven guilty? Was it the ideological fascism running rampant on our college campuses under the curious banner of "safe spaces" and "free speech zones?" Was it the federal funding of an organization, euphemistically known as "Planned Parenthood," that has been proven to be trafficking in human body parts?

Was it the shameless anti-Semitism proudly on display by our newly elected members of Congress? Was it the left's misogynistic disregard for women's rights, women's restrooms and women's sports? Was it the recent sexual objectification of an 11-year-old boy on ABC's *Good Morning America*? Was it the federal judge who just overturned an injunction protecting a Catholic order of nuns, called the Little Sisters of the Poor, from being forced to purchase abortifacient contraception in their health care? (Sidebar: They're nuns. They're celibate. Why do they need any contraception, let alone that which induces abortion?)

Were any of these absurdities the reason for Ms. Romano's angst?

No.

Quite the contrary, rather than worry about such humdrum

matters as guarding our private property from confiscation, protecting our children from pederasty, fighting for the ontological dignity of women, condemning congressional Jew-baiting and holding our government accountable to its sworn obligation to secure and defend our nation's sovereign borders, it seems Ms. Romano's chief concern is that Vice President Mike Pence's wife is teaching at a Christian School in Virginia that actually has rules against non-Christian conduct.

Gasp! Mrs. Pence, a devout Christian, actually has the temerity to serve as a faculty member at a Christian institution that teaches exactly what its name implies – Christianity.

Immanuel Christian School in Springfield, Virginia, actually requires its faculty to control themselves, act like adults, behave selflessly and, thereby, refrain from sexual activity, heterosexual or otherwise, outside the bounds of Christianity's 2,000-year-old teachings concerning marriage (That's one man, one woman, for one lifetime for all those who seem to think that all civil and moral law just happen burst on the scene via messianic fiat in 2015).

This is the travesty that has Ms. Romano in shock and horror. A Christian woman teaches at a Christian school that teaches its students to act like Christians. "How can this happen in American in 2019?"

At the risk of being just a bit pedantic, I'm going to venture an answer to Ms. Romano's question, but first, a bit of a history lesson.

In 1791, James Madison wrote the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Madison's argument was clear: The federal government should never presume to define the matters of the church.

It should never pretend to “establish,” dictate, define, contradict or contravene religious belief or practice. This is not the government’s business. It is the business of the church, and as such, government does not have the authority to tell any citizen what their religion means or what its requirements and prohibitions can or cannot be.

Madison made this very simple, so that even the writers for *Politico* and *The Washington Post* could understand. Those in Congress and the White House are confined by the U.S. Constitution to leave the church alone and never presume to tell congregants how, or how not, to practice their faith.

Eleven years later, Jefferson found it necessary to reassure a skittish bunch of Baptists in Danbury, Connecticut, who were not yet convinced that the government would mind its p’s and q’s. “I contemplate with (utmost) reverence,” he said, “that act which declared that [the] legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.”

Yes, there is a “wall” separating the church from the state, but—much to the chagrin of the likes of Ms. Romano—it was not erected as a prison, but rather as fortress. It was constructed to protect the church, not to confine it. Jefferson no more intended this wall to restrain religion than he intended the walls of his own home to restrain him.

As a house has a door whereby you come and go—engaging culture and doing your civic duty—so Jefferson’s wall had a door whereby the church entered society to do its good work. The key here is that the church holds the key. The door is locked from the inside, not the outside. Jefferson was clearly telling us this wall is built for the church’s benefit, not the government’s.

Now let’s return to Ms. Romano’s question. How could our vice

president's wife be so bold as to teach at a school that is historically orthodox, conservatively Christian, and proudly so?

"How could this happen in America in 2019?"

Because we live in a constitutional republic protected by the First Amendment. That's how.

And thank God we do.

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