

BIGOTED MINISTER REBUKED; GOV. PERRY BREAKS TIES

On October 8, Republican presidential candidate Gov. Rick Perry spoke at the Values Voter Summit, a conference sponsored by Tony Perkins' Family Research Council; there was an array of mostly evangelical speakers. Introducing him was Rev. Robert Jeffress, a Dallas pastor. Following the event, Jeffress made anti-Mormon comments. Then it was revealed that he had previously made anti-Catholic remarks. That's when we got involved.

Jeffress first got into trouble, tainting Perry in the process, when he spoke derisively about the Mormon faith of Mitt Romney; he said "Mormonism is a cult." Two days later, he chided Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism as "false religions." His remarks about Catholicism, however, were the most offensive.

In 2010, Jeffress said the Catholic Church was the outgrowth of a "corruption" called the "Babylonian mystery." He continued, "Much of what you see in the Catholic Church today doesn't come from God's word. It comes from that cult-like pagan religion. Isn't that the genius of Satan?"

Bill Donohue replied, "Where did they find this guy? When theological differences are demonized by the faithful of any religion—never mind by a clergyman—it makes a mockery of their own religion. Rev. Jeffress is a poster boy for hatred, not Christianity."

Veteran reporter Wayne Barrett subsequently called Donohue. By this time, Perry had distanced himself from Jeffress for his anti-Mormon remarks, so Barrett asked Donohue if he should do so again. Donohue said it would be wise for Perry to break all ties with him.

Donohue then went on "Hardball" with Chris Matthews to discuss

this issue on Oct. 13. Donohue made it clear that his beef was with Jeffress, and that he has good relations with many evangelicals.

That night, following the intervention of Catholic activist Deal Hudson, Perry called Donohue at home. They spoke candidly about the Jeffress incident, and related matters. Perry was sincere: nothing that the pastor said about Catholicism represents his views.

The next day, Donohue released a statement saying, "I very much appreciate Gov. Perry's interest in getting this issue behind him in a responsible manner. He succeeded. Case closed."

Just a few days before Jeffress started the controversy, Donohue was in Washington, D.C. meeting with prominent evangelicals like Perkins, Tim Wildmon, Dr. Richard Land and others. The goodwill generated there paid dividends for everyone a week later.

It seems not a presidential campaign goes by without a role for the Catholic League. And we still have a year to go. Stay tuned.