

CALIFORNIA MISSIONS DESERVE FEDERAL FUNDS

A bill passed by the House of Representatives authorizing \$10 million for the restoration of 21 Spanish missions in California has been submitted to President Bush for approval. Of the 21 missions, 19 are owned by the Catholic Church and two are owned by the state; seven have been declared national landmarks.

Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer, a supporter of the legislation, notes that none of the money will go to the Catholic Church; all of it goes to a non-profit group, the California Mission Foundation, that will oversee its distribution. Nonetheless, Americans United for Separation of Church and State has threatened to sue. Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on this issue:

“The movement to excise religion from history and culture is not only wrongheaded, it simply cannot be done: religion is the most salient constitutive element of any culture. If even the communists have had to admit that it cannot be done, surely our own church-and-state watchdogs are capable of learning this verity. But instead they act like yesterday’s communists in trying to rewrite the past. The fact is that the history of California is unintelligible without noting the magnificent and lasting contributions of Spanish missionaries.

“The government has a strong interest in preserving the nation’s heritage, and that is why it was appropriate for the House to provide the necessary resources for the restoration of the Spanish missions. President Bush, who is our most religion-friendly president in years, will surely sign this bill. The Catholic League congratulates Senator Boxer for her major role in this effort.

“One final note: the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the state of California recently gave federal and state money to complete renovations of the Breed Street Shul in Los Angeles—much of it to pay for restoration of the synagogue’s stained-glass windows—and no civil libertarians complained. We wonder why.”