

# CHRISTOPHER REEVE APOLOGIZES

In a September 17 interview granted to Britain's *Guardian* newspaper, actor Christopher Reeve accused President Bush of bowing to Catholic interests on stem cell research. We criticized Reeve's comments the same day. On September 18, he apologized. Thus did the issue die.

The "Superman" actor initially charged that as a result of this alleged obstruction of research on the part of Bush and the Church, he was unnecessarily confined to a wheelchair; Reeve supports stem cell research and therapeutic cloning. He also saw another sinister aspect to the story: "We've had a severe violation of the separation of church and state in the handling of what to do about this emerging technology," he added.

Reeve's absurd charges prompted the following news release by the Catholic League:

"It is nothing if not slanderous for Reeve to suggest that Catholics are the only ones left who respect the sanctity of human life. While it is true that the Catholic Church leads the way in this just cause, there are many Protestants, Jews and Muslims (as well as non-believers) who feel the same way.

"Human life does not begin at birth. It does not begin at 'quickenings.' It does not begin at implantation. It begins at fertilization. This is not Catholic opinion. It is Biology 101. Ergo, stem cell research and cloning of all types are immoral.

"Moreover, the line between church and state is not crossed when a president comes down on the same side of an issue that a world religion does. Even to imply as much is invidious: the thrust of this remark is to abet an abridgment of Catholic free-speech rights.

“Reeve sounds more like ‘Stupidman’ than ‘Superman’ when he suggests there is some kind of cabal at work between President Bush and Catholics. The fact that President Bush opposes utilitarian ethics makes him an honorable man and has nothing to do with any alleged conspiracy. Reeve has every right to make his case in favor of embryonic stem cell research and therapeutic cloning, but he has no right to engage in Catholic baiting while doing so.”

When Reeve apologized the next day, we instantly said it was “commendable” of him to do so. It did not go unnoticed that Reeve couldn’t resist stating one more time that he continues to believe in the separation of church and state. To which we said, “This was wholly unnecessary—only ignorant Americans would disagree. What is troubling here is the implication: it suggests that it is improper for religious men and women to try to affect public policy.” We ended by saying, “religious apartheid is always objectionable, even when dressed in constitutional cloth.”

Notwithstanding this caveat, Reeve’s apology struck us as sincere and therefore brought closure to the issue.